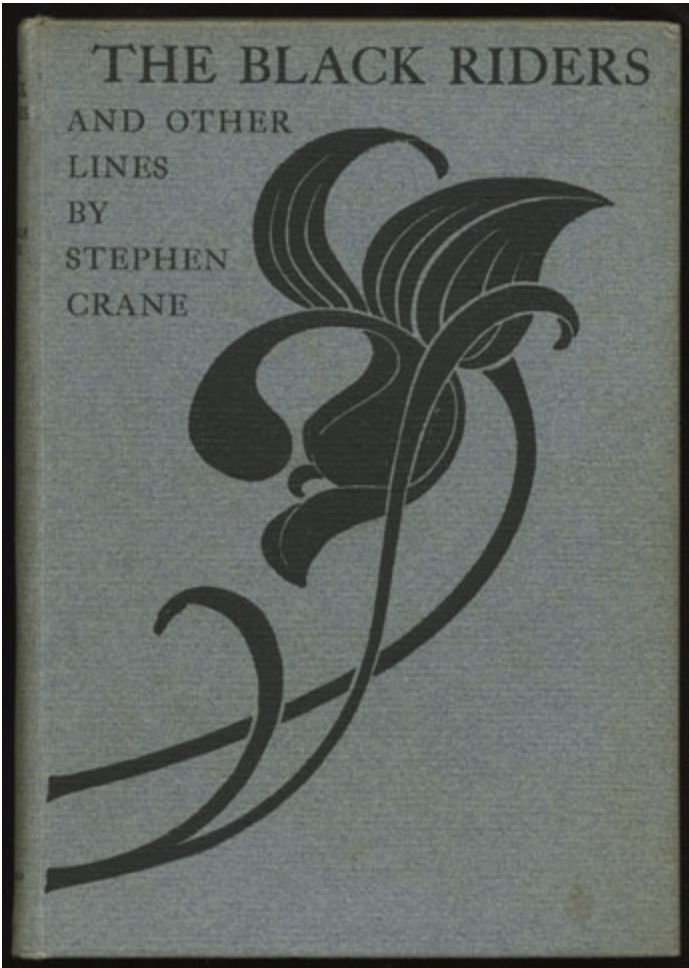


1. [Stephen Crane: The Black Riders and other lines](#)
2. [Afterword](#)
3. [The Black Riders: Additional Textual Materials](#)

Stephen Crane: The Black Riders and other lines
The seminal volume of poetry by Stephen Crane
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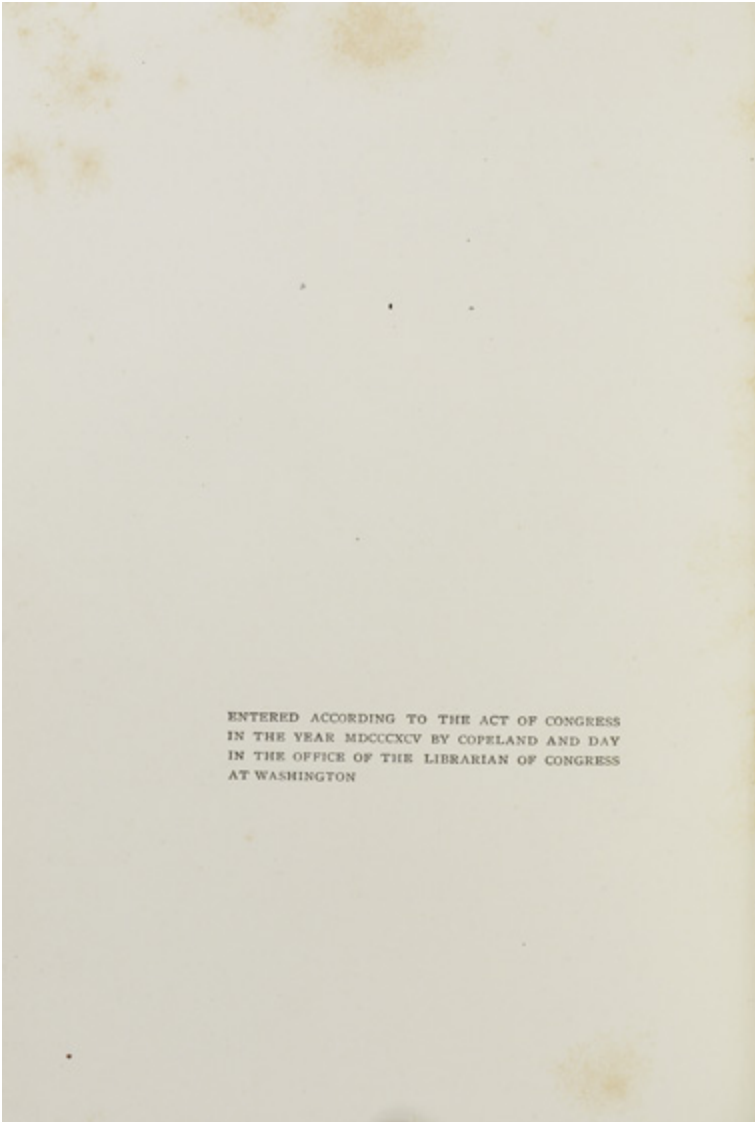
THE BLACK RIDERS AND
OTHER LINES BY STE-
PHEN CRANE

BOSTON COPELAND AND DAY MDCCCXCV

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THE BLACK RIDERS AND OTHER LINES BY STEPHEN CRANE

BOSTON COPELAND AND DAY MDCCCXCV



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TO HAMLIN GARLAND

I

I

BLACK RIDERS CAME FROM THE SEA.
THERE WAS CLANG AND CLANG OF SPEAR AND
SHIELD,
AND CLASH AND CLASH OF HOOF AND HEEL,
WILD SHOUTS AND THE WAVE OF HAIR
IN THE RUSH UPON THE WIND:
THUS THE RIDE OF SIN.

I

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BLACK RIDERS CAME FROM THE SEA.

THERE WAS CLANG AND CLANG OF SPEAR AND SHIELD,

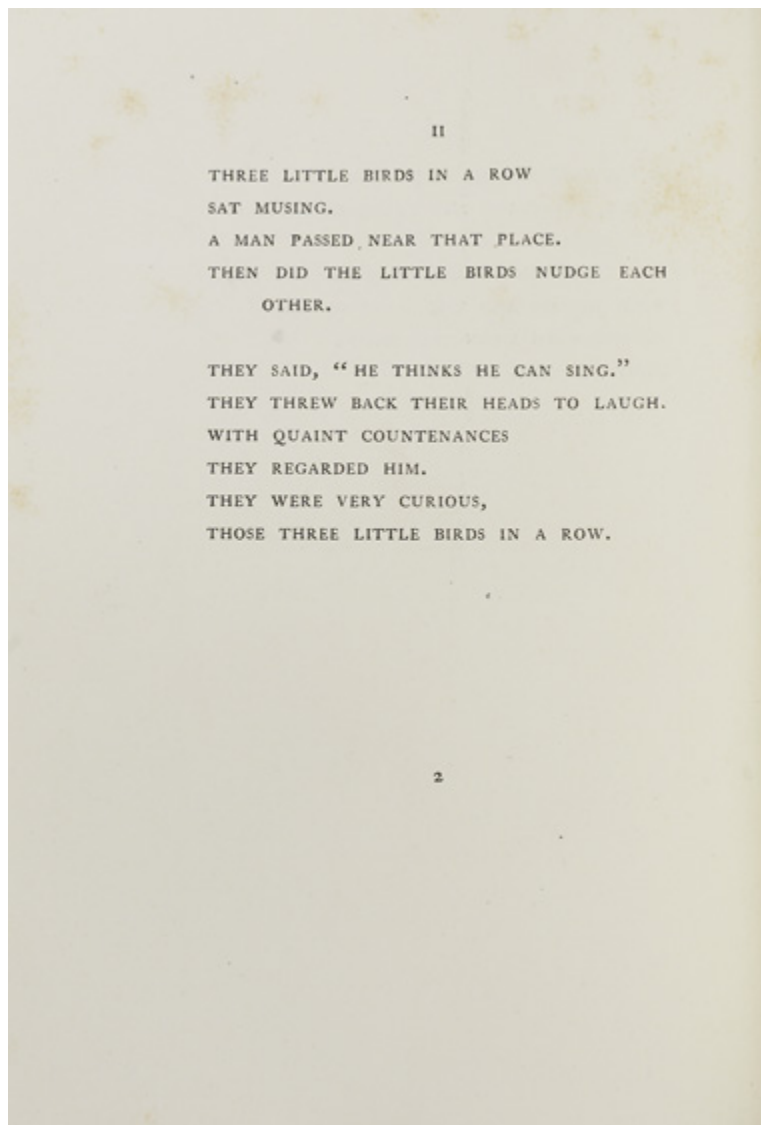
AND CLASH AND CLASH OF HOOF AND HEEL,

WILD SHOUTS AND THE WAVE OF HAIR

IN THE RUSH UPON THE WIND:

THUS THE RIDE OF SIN.

II



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THREE LITTLE BIRDS IN A ROW

SAT MUSING.

A MAN PASSED NEAR THAT PLACE.

THEN DID THE LITTLE BIRDS NUDGE EACH OTHER.

THEY SAID, “HE THINKS HE CAN SING.”

THEY THREW BACK THEIR HEADS TO LAUGH.

WITH QUAIN T COUNTENANCES

THEY REGARDED HIM.

THEY WERE VERY CURIOUS,

THOSE THREE LITTLE BIRDS IN A ROW.

III

III

IN THE DESERT

I SAW A CREATURE, NAKED, BESTIAL,
WHO, SQUATTING UPON THE GROUND,
HELD HIS HEART IN HIS HANDS,
AND ATE OF IT.

I SAID, "IS IT GOOD, FRIEND?"

"IT IS BITTER — BITTER," HE ANSWERED;

"BUT I LIKE IT

"BECAUSE IT IS BITTER,

"AND BECAUSE IT IS MY HEART."

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

IN THE DESERT

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IV

IV

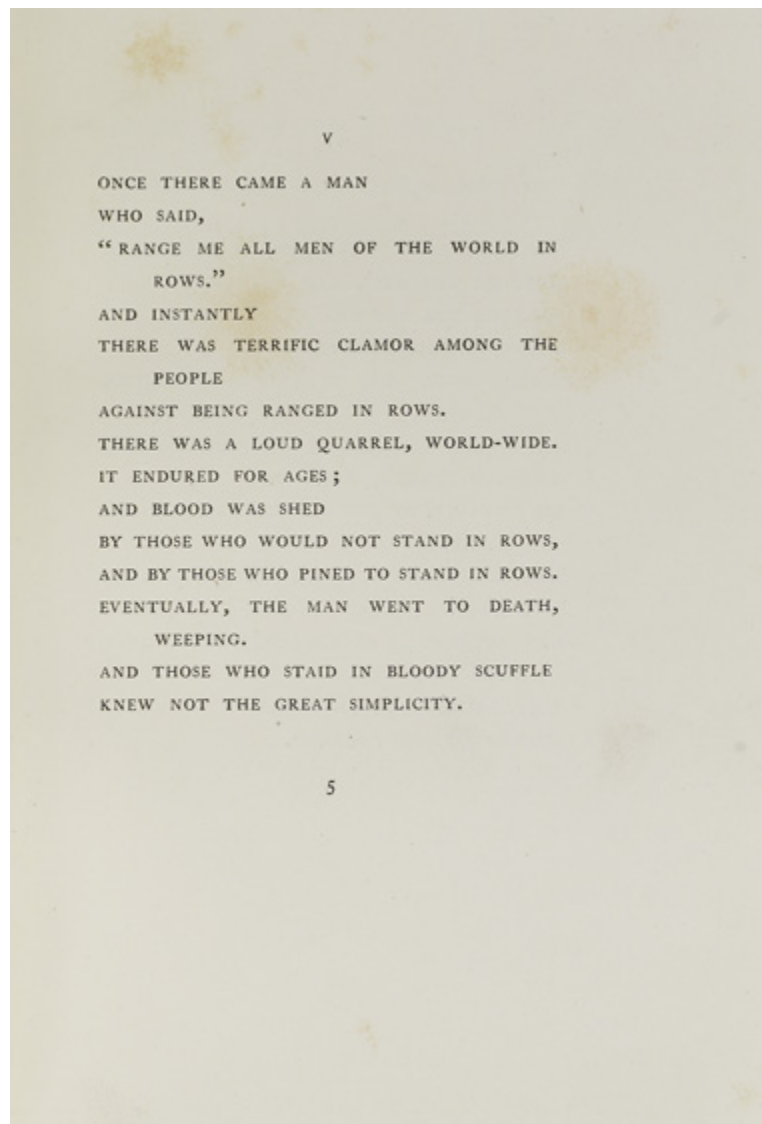
YES, I HAVE A THOUSAND TONGUES,
AND NINE AND NINETY-NINE LIE.
THOUGH I STRIVE TO USE THE ONE,
IT WILL MAKE NO MELODY AT MY WILL,
BUT IS DEAD IN MY MOUTH.

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THOUGH I STRIVE TO USE THE ONE,
IT WILL MAKE NO MELODY AT MY WILL,

BUT IS DEAD IN MY MOUTH.

V



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ONCE THERE CAME A MAN

WHO SAID,

“RANGE ME ALL MEN OF THE WORLD IN ROWS.”

AND INSTANTLY

THERE WAS TERRIFIC CLAMOR AMONG THE PEOPLE
AGAINST BEING RANGED IN ROWS.

THERE WAS A LOUD QUARREL, WORLD-WIDE.

IT ENDURED FOR AGES;

AND BLOOD WAS SHED

BY THOSE WHO WOULD NOT STAND IN ROWS,

AND BY THOSE WHO PINED TO STAND IN ROWS.

EVENTUALLY, THE MAN WENT TO DEATH, WEEPING.

AND THOSE WHO STAYED IN BLOODY SCUFFLE

KNEW NOT THE GREAT SIMPLICITY.

VI

GOD FASHIONED THE SHIP OF THE WORLD CARE-
FULLY.

WITH THE INFINITE SKILL OF AN ALL-MASTER
MADE HE THE HULL AND THE SAILS,
HELD HE THE RUDDER
READY FOR ADJUSTMENT.

ERECT STOOD HE, SCANNING HIS WORK
PROUDLY.

THEN — AT FATEFUL TIME — A WRONG CALLED,
AND GOD TURNED, HEEDING.

LO, THE SHIP, AT THIS OPPORTUNITY, SLIPPED
SLYLY,

MAKING CUNNING NOISELESS TRAVEL DOWN THE
WAYS.

SO THAT, FOREVER RUDDERLESS, IT WENT UPON
THE SEAS

GOING RIDICULOUS VOYAGES,
MAKING QUAIN'T PROGRESS,

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

GOD FASHIONED THE SHIP OF THE WORLD CAREFULLY.

WITH THE INFINITE SKILL OF AN ALL-MASTER

MADE HE THE HULL AND THE SAILS,

HELD HE THE RUDDER

READY FOR ADJUSTMENT.

ERECT STOOD HE, SCANNING HIS WORK PROUDLY.

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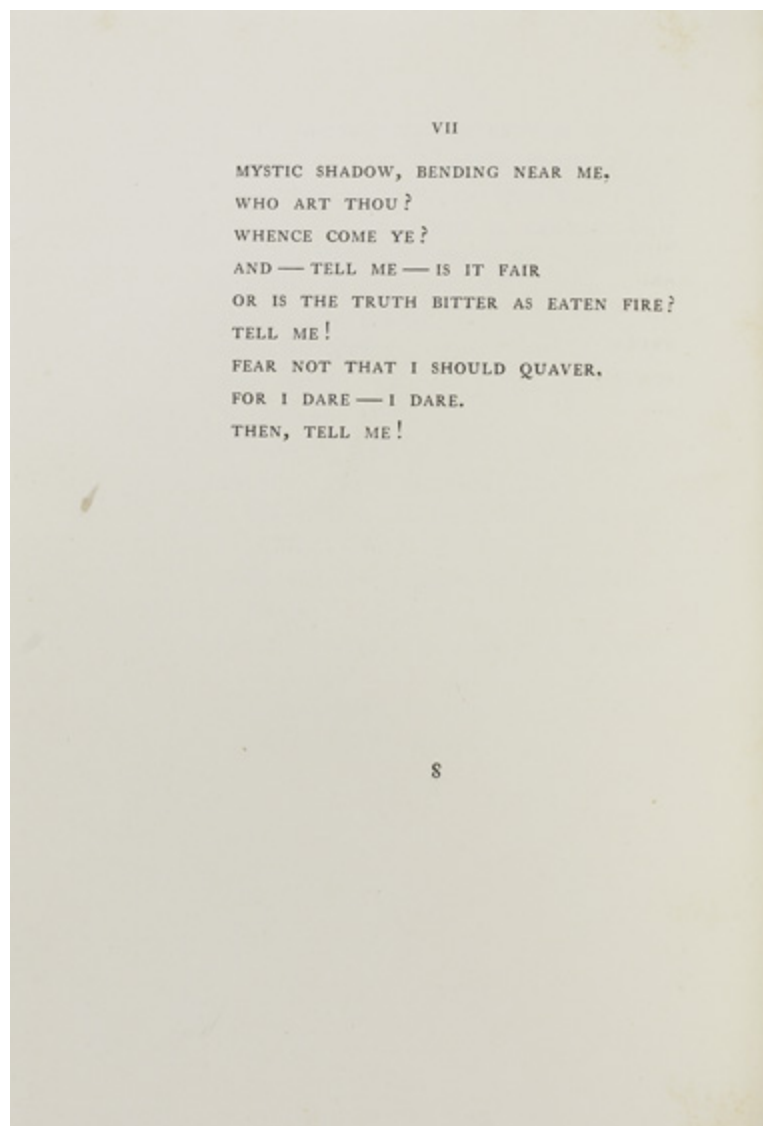
TURNING AS WITH SERIOUS PURPOSE
BEFORE STUPID WINDS.
AND THERE WERE MANY IN THE SKY
WHO LAUGHED AT THIS THING.

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TURNING AS WITH SERIOUS PURPOSE
BEFORE STUPID WINDS.

AND THERE WERE MANY IN THE SKY
WHO LAUGHED AT THIS THING.

VII



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MYSTIC SHADOW, BENDING NEAR ME,
WHO ART THOU?
WHENCE COME YE?

AND—TELL ME—IS IT FAIR

OR IS THE TRUTH BITTER AS EATEN FIRE?

TELL ME!

FEAR NOT THAT I SHOULD QUAVER,

FOR I DARE—I DARE.

THEN, TELL ME!

VIII

VIII

I LOOKED HERE;
I LOOKED THERE;
NOWHERE COULD I SEE MY LOVE.
AND — THIS TIME —
SHE WAS IN MY HEART.
TRULY, THEN, I HAVE NO COMPLAINT,
FOR THOUGH SHE BE FAIR AND FAIRER,
SHE IS NONE SO FAIR AS SHE
IN MY HEART.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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IX

IX

I STOOD UPON A HIGH PLACE,
AND SAW, BELOW, MANY DEVILS
RUNNING, LEAPING,
AND CAROUSING IN SIN.
ONE LOOKED UP, GRINNING,
AND SAID, "COMRADE! BROTHER!"

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ONE LOOKED UP, GRINNING,
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X

X

SHOULD THE WIDE WORLD ROLL AWAY,
LEAVING BLACK TERROR,
LIMITLESS NIGHT,
NOR GOD, NOR MAN, NOR PLACE TO STAND
WOULD BE TO ME ESSENTIAL,
IF THOU AND THY WHITE ARMS WERE THERE,
AND THE FALL TO DOOM A LONG WAY.

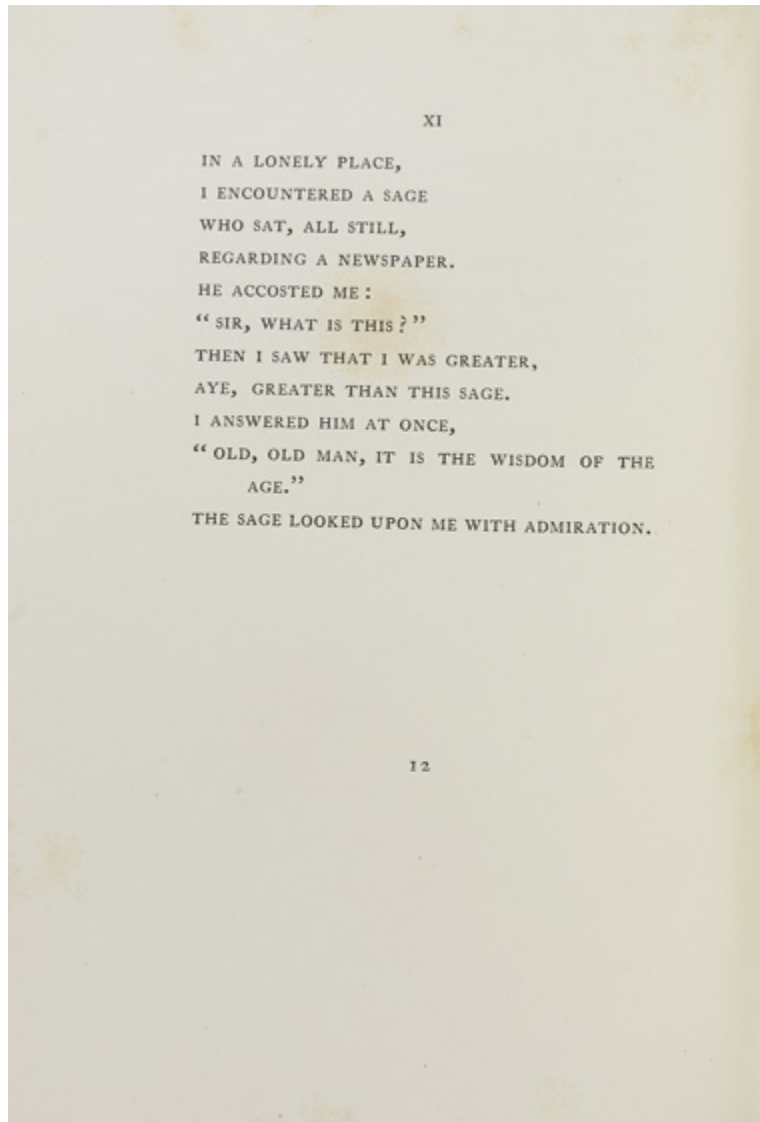
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XI



[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

IN A LONELY PLACE,
I ENCOUNTERED A SAGE
WHO SAT, ALL STILL,
REGARDING A NEWSPAPER.
HE ACCOSTED ME:
“SIR, WHAT IS THIS?”
THEN I SAW THAT I WAS GREATER,
AYE, GREATER THAN THIS SAGE.
I ANSWERED HIM AT ONCE,
“OLD, OLD MAN, IT IS THE WISDOM OF THE AGE.”
THE SAGE LOOKED UPON ME WITH ADMIRATION.

XII

“AND THE SINS OF THE FATHERS SHALL
BE VISITED UPON THE HEADS OF THE CHILD-
DREN, EVEN UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH
GENERATION OF THEM THAT HATE ME.”

WELL, THEN, I HATE THEE, UNRIGHTEOUS
PICTURE;

WICKED IMAGE, I HATE THEE;
SO, STRIKE WITH THY VENGEANCE
THE HEADS OF THOSE LITTLE MEN
WHO COME BLINDLY.
IT WILL BE A BRAVE THING.

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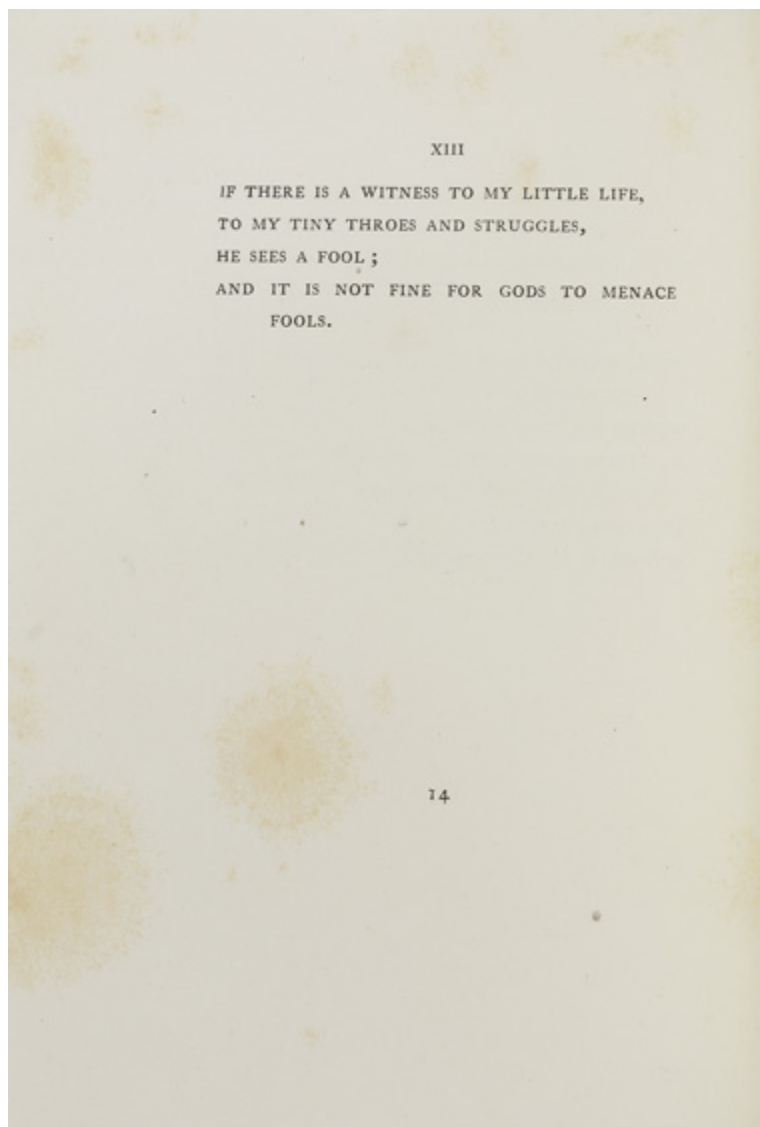
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IT WILL BE A BRAVE THING.

XIII



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IF THERE IS A WITNESS TO MY LITTLE LIFE,
TO MY TINY THROES AND STRUGGLES,
HE SEES A FOOL;
AND IT IS NOT FINE FOR GODS TO MENACE FOOLS.

XIV

XIV

THERE WAS CRIMSON CLASH OF WAR.
LANDS TURNED BLACK AND BARE ;
WOMEN WEPT ;
BABES RAN, WONDERING.
THERE CAME ONE WHO UNDERSTOOD NOT THESE
THINGS.
HE SAID, " WHY IS THIS ? "
WHEREUPON A MILLION STROVE TO ANSWER
HIM.
THERE WAS SUCH INTRICATE CLAMOR OF
TONGUES,
THAT STILL THE REASON WAS NOT.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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XV

XV

“TELL BRAVE DEEDS OF WAR.”

THEN THEY RECOUNTED TALES,—

“THERE WERE STERN STANDS

“AND BITTER RUNS FOR GLORY.”

AH, I THINK THERE WERE BRAVER DEEDS.

16

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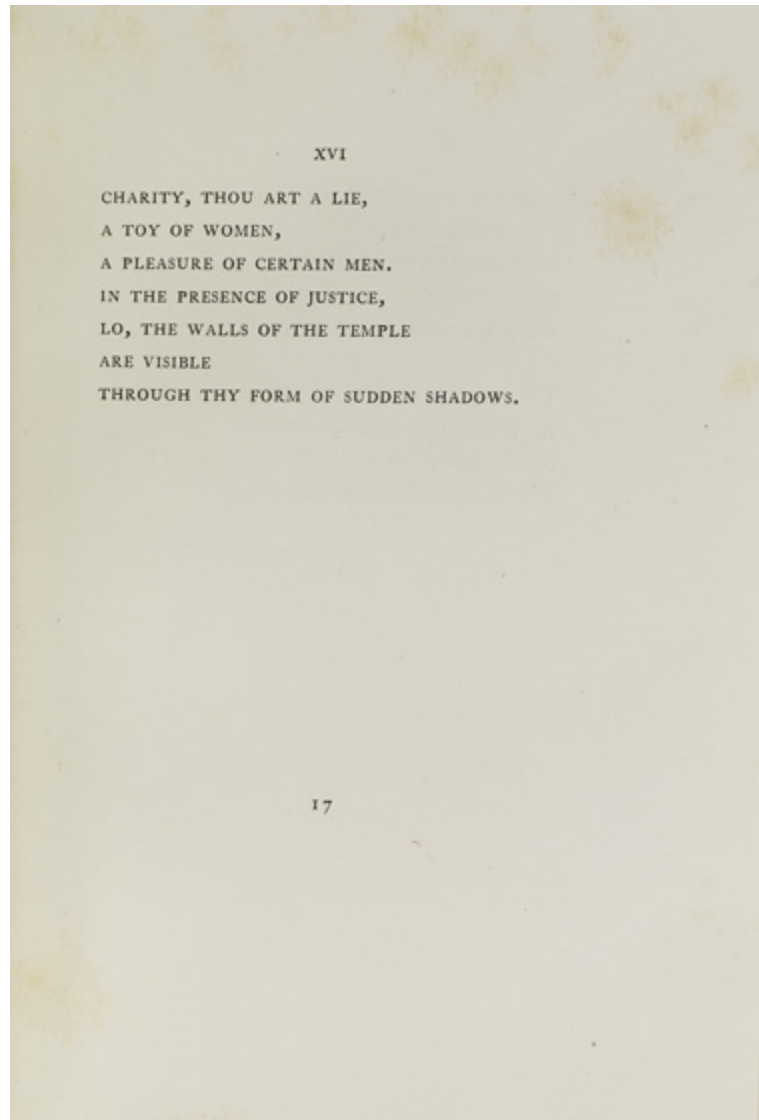
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XVI



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CHARITY, THOU ART A LIE,
A TOY OF WOMEN,
A PLEASURE OF CERTAIN MEN.
IN THE PRESENCE OF JUSTICE,
LO, THE WALLS OF THE TEMPLE
ARE VISIBLE
THROUGH THY FORM OF SUDDEN SHADOWS.

XVII

XVII

THERE WERE MANY WHO WENT IN HUDDLED
PROCESSION,
THEY KNEW NOT WHITHER ;
BUT, AT ANY RATE, SUCCESS OR CALAMITY
WOULD ATTEND ALL IN EQUALITY.

THERE WAS ONE WHO SOUGHT A NEW ROAD.
HE WENT INTO DIREFUL THICKETS,
AND ULTIMATELY HE DIED THUS, ALONE ;
BUT THEY SAID HE HAD COURAGE.

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XVIII

XVIII

IN HEAVEN,
SOME LITTLE BLADES OF GRASS
STOOD BEFORE GOD.
“WHAT DID YOU DO?”
THEN ALL SAVE ONE OF THE LITTLE BLADES
BEGAN EAGERLY TO RELATE
THE MERITS OF THEIR LIVES.
THIS ONE STAYED A SMALL WAY BEHIND,
ASHAMED.
PRESENTLY, GOD SAID,
“AND WHAT DID YOU DO?”
THE LITTLE BLADE ANSWERED, “OH, MY LORD,
“MEMORY IS BITTER TO ME,
“FOR, IF I DID GOOD DEEDS,
“I KNOW NOT OF THEM.”
THEN GOD, IN ALL HIS SPLENDOR,
AROSE FROM HIS THRONE.
“OH, BEST LITTLE BLADE OF GRASS!” HE SAID.

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XIX

XIX

A GOD IN WRATH
WAS BEATING A MAN;
HE CUFFED HIM LOUDLY
WITH THUNDEROUS BLOWS
THAT RANG AND ROLLED OVER THE EARTH.
ALL PEOPLE CAME RUNNING.
THE MAN SCREAMED AND STRUGGLED,
AND BIT MADLY AT THE FEET OF THE GOD.
THE PEOPLE CRIED,
“AH, WHAT A WICKED MAN!”
AND —
“AH, WHAT A REDOUBTABLE GOD!”

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AND—
“AH, WHAT A REDOUBTABLE GOD!”

XX

XX

A LEARNED MAN CAME TO ME ONCE.
HE SAID, "I KNOW THE WAY, — COME."
AND I WAS OVERJOYED AT THIS.
TOGETHER WE HASTENED.
SOON, TOO SOON, WERE WE
WHERE MY EYES WERE USELESS,
AND I KNEW NOT THE WAYS OF MY FEET.
I CLUNG TO THE HAND OF MY FRIEND ;
BUT AT LAST HE CRIED, "I AM LOST."

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XXI

XXI

THERE WAS, BEFORE ME,
MILE UPON MILE
OF SNOW, ICE, BURNING SAND.
AND YET I COULD LOOK BEYOND ALL THIS,
TO A PLACE OF INFINITE BEAUTY ;
AND I COULD SEE THE LOVELINESS OF HER
WHO WALKED IN THE SHADE OF THE TREES.
WHEN I GAZED,
ALL WAS LOST
BUT THIS PLACE OF BEAUTY AND HER.
WHEN I GAZED,
AND IN MY GAZING, DESIRED,
THEN CAME AGAIN
MILE UPON MILE,
OF SNOW, ICE, BURNING SAND.

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XXII

XXII

ONCE I SAW MOUNTAINS ANGRY,
AND RANGED IN BATTLE-FRONT.
AGAINST THEM STOOD A LITTLE MAN ;
AYE, HE WAS NO BIGGER THAN MY FINGER.
I LAUGHED, AND SPOKE TO ONE NEAR ME,
“ WILL HE PREVAIL ? ”
“ SURELY, ” REPLIED THIS OTHER ;
“ HIS GRANDFATHERS BEAT THEM MANY TIMES. ”
THEN DID I SEE MUCH VIRTUE IN GRAND-
FATHERS, —
AT LEAST, FOR THE LITTLE MAN
WHO STOOD AGAINST THE MOUNTAINS.

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XXIII

XXIII

PLACES AMONG THE STARS,
SOFT GARDENS NEAR THE SUN,
KEEP YOUR DISTANT BEAUTY ;
SHED NO BEAMS UPON MY WEAK HEART.
SINCE SHE IS HERE
IN A PLACE OF BLACKNESS,
NOT YOUR GOLDEN DAYS
NOR YOUR SILVER NIGHTS
CAN CALL ME TO YOU.
SINCE SHE IS HERE
IN A PLACE OF BLACKNESS,
HERE I STAY AND WAIT.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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CAN CALL ME TO YOU.

SINCE SHE IS HERE
IN A PLACE OF BLACKNESS,
HERE I STAY AND WAIT.

XXIV

XXIV

I SAW A MAN PURSUING THE HORIZON ;
ROUND AND ROUND THEY SPED.

I WAS DISTURBED AT THIS ;
I ACCOSTED THE MAN.

“ IT IS FUTILE,” I SAID,
“ YOU CAN NEVER ” —

“ YOU LIE,” HE CRIED,
AND RAN ON.

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“YOU LIE,” HE CRIED

AND RAN ON.

XXV

XXV

BEHOLD, THE GRAVE OF A WICKED MAN,
AND NEAR IT, A STERN SPIRIT.

THERE CAME A DROOPING MAID WITH VIOLETS,
BUT THE SPIRIT GRASPED HER ARM.

“NO FLOWERS FOR HIM,” HE SAID.

THE MAID WEPT :

“AH, I LOVED HIM.”

BUT THE SPIRIT, GRIM AND FROWNING :

“NO FLOWERS FOR HIM.”

NOW, THIS IS IT —

IF THE SPIRIT WAS JUST,

WHY DID THE MAID WEEP ?

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XXVI

XXVI

THERE WAS SET BEFORE ME A MIGHTY HILL,
AND LONG DAYS I CLIMBED
THROUGH REGIONS OF SNOW.
WHEN I HAD BEFORE ME THE SUMMIT-VIEW,
IT SEEMED THAT MY LABOR
HAD BEEN TO SEE GARDENS
LYING AT IMPOSSIBLE DISTANCES.

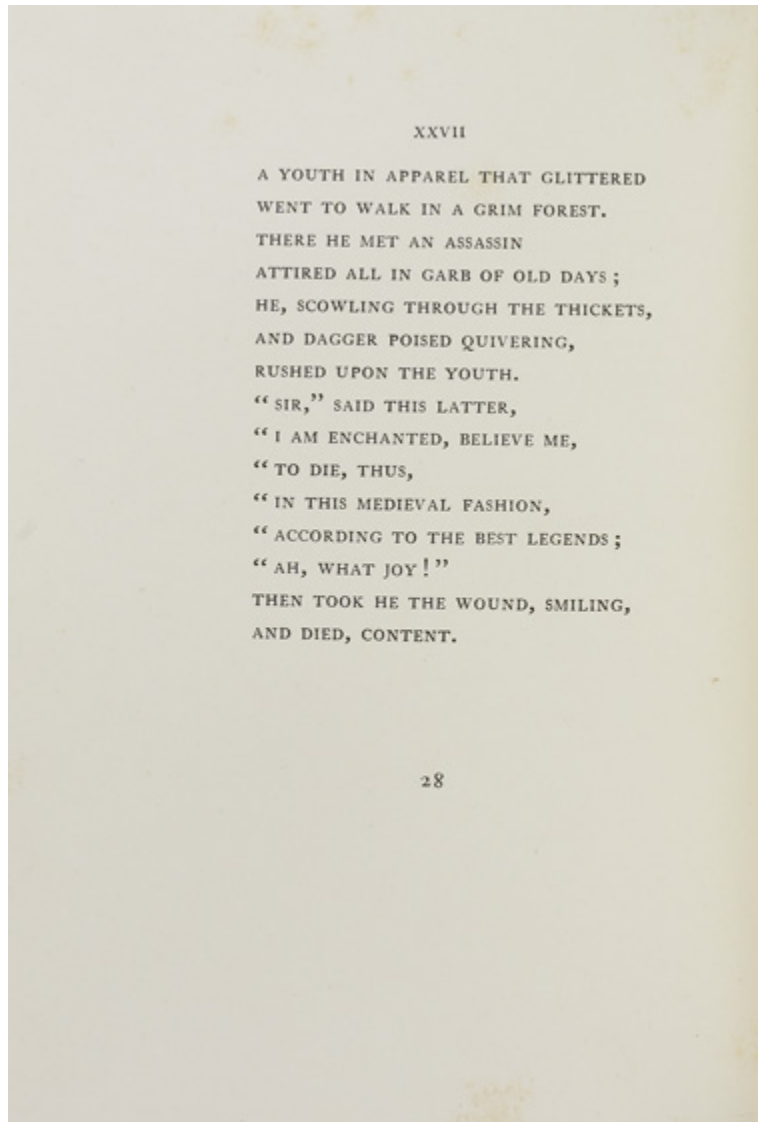
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HAD BEEN TO SEE GARDENS
LYING AT IMPOSSIBLE DISTANCES.

XXVII



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A YOUTH IN APPAREL THAT GLITTERED
WENT TO WALK IN A GRIM FOREST.
THERE HE MET AN ASSASSIN
ATTIRED ALL IN GARB OF OLD DAYS;
HE, SCOWLING THROUGH THE THICKETS,
AND DAGGER POISED QUIVERING,
RUSHED UPON THE YOUTH.
“SIR,” SAID THIS LATTER,
“I AM ENCHANTED, BELIEVE ME,
“TO DIE, THUS,
“IN THIS MEDIEVAL FASHION,
“ACCORDING TO THE BEST LEGENDS;
“AH, WHAT JOY!”
THEN TOOK HE THE WOUND, SMILING,
AND DIED, CONTENT.

XXVIII

XXVIII

"TRUTH," SAID A TRAVELLER,
"IS A ROCK, A MIGHTY FORTRESS;
"OFTEN HAVE I BEEN TO IT,
"EVEN TO ITS HIGHEST TOWER,
"FROM WHENCE THE WORLD LOOKS BLACK."

"TRUTH," SAID A TRAVELLER,
"IS A BREATH, A WIND,
"A SHADOW, A PHANTOM;
"LONG HAVE I PURSUED IT,
"BUT NEVER HAVE I TOUCHED
"THE HEM OF ITS GARMENT."

AND I BELIEVED THE SECOND TRAVELLER;
FOR TRUTH WAS TO ME
A BREATH, A WIND,
A SHADOW, A PHANTOM,
AND NEVER HAD I TOUCHED
THE HEM OF ITS GARMENT.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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A BREATH, A WIND,

A SHADOW, A PHANTOM,

AND NEVER HAD I TOUCHED

THE HEM OF ITS GARMENT.

XXIX

XXIX

BEHOLD, FROM THE LAND OF THE FARTHER
SUNS

I RETURNED.

AND I WAS IN A REPTILE-SWARMING PLACE,
PEOPLED, OTHERWISE, WITH GRIMACES,
SHROUDED ABOVE IN BLACK IMPENETRABLENESS.

I SHRANK, LOATHING,
SICK WITH IT.

AND I SAID TO HIM,

“WHAT IS THIS?”

HE MADE ANSWER SLOWLY,

“SPIRIT, THIS IS A WORLD;

“THIS WAS YOUR HOME.”

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BEHOLD, FROM THE LAND OF THE FARTHER SUNS

I RETURNED.

AND I WAS IN A REPTILE-SWARMING PLACE,

PEOPLED, OTHERWISE, WITH GRIMACES,

SHROUDED ABOUT IN BLACK IMPENETRABLENESS.

I SHRANK, LOATHING,

SICK WITH IT.

AND I SAID TO HIM,

“WHAT IS THIS?”

HE MADE ANSWER SLOWLY,

“SPIRIT, THIS IS A WORLD;

“THIS WAS YOUR HOME.”

XXX

XXX

SUPPOSING THAT I SHOULD HAVE THE COURAGE
TO LET A RED SWORD OF VIRTUE
PLUNGE INTO MY HEART,
LETTING TO THE WEEDS OF THE GROUND
MY SINFUL BLOOD,
WHAT CAN YOU OFFER ME?
A GARDENED CASTLE?
A FLOWERY KINGDOM?

WHAT? A HOPE?
THEN HENCE WITH YOUR RED SWORD OF VIRTUE.

31

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A GARDENED CASTLE?

A FLOWERY KINGDOM?

WHAT? A HOPE?

THEN HENCE WITH YOUR RED SWORD OF VIRTUE.

XXXI

XXXI

MANY WORKMEN
BUILT A HUGE BALL OF MASONRY
UPON A MOUNTAIN-TOP.
THEN THEY WENT TO THE VALLEY BELOW,
AND TURNED TO BEHOLD THEIR WORK.
“IT IS GRAND,” THEY SAID ;
THEY LOVED THE THING.

OF A SUDDEN, IT MOVED :
IT CAME UPON THEM SWIFTLY ;
IT CRUSHED THEM ALL TO BLOOD.
BUT SOME HAD OPPORTUNITY TO SQUEAL.

32

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XXXII

XXXII

TWO OR THREE ANGELS
CAME NEAR TO THE EARTH.
THEY SAW A FAT CHURCH.
LITTLE BLACK STREAMS OF PEOPLE
CAME AND WENT IN CONTINUALLY.
AND THE ANGELS WERE PUZZLED
TO KNOW WHY THE PEOPLE WENT THUS,
AND WHY THEY STAYED SO LONG WITHIN.

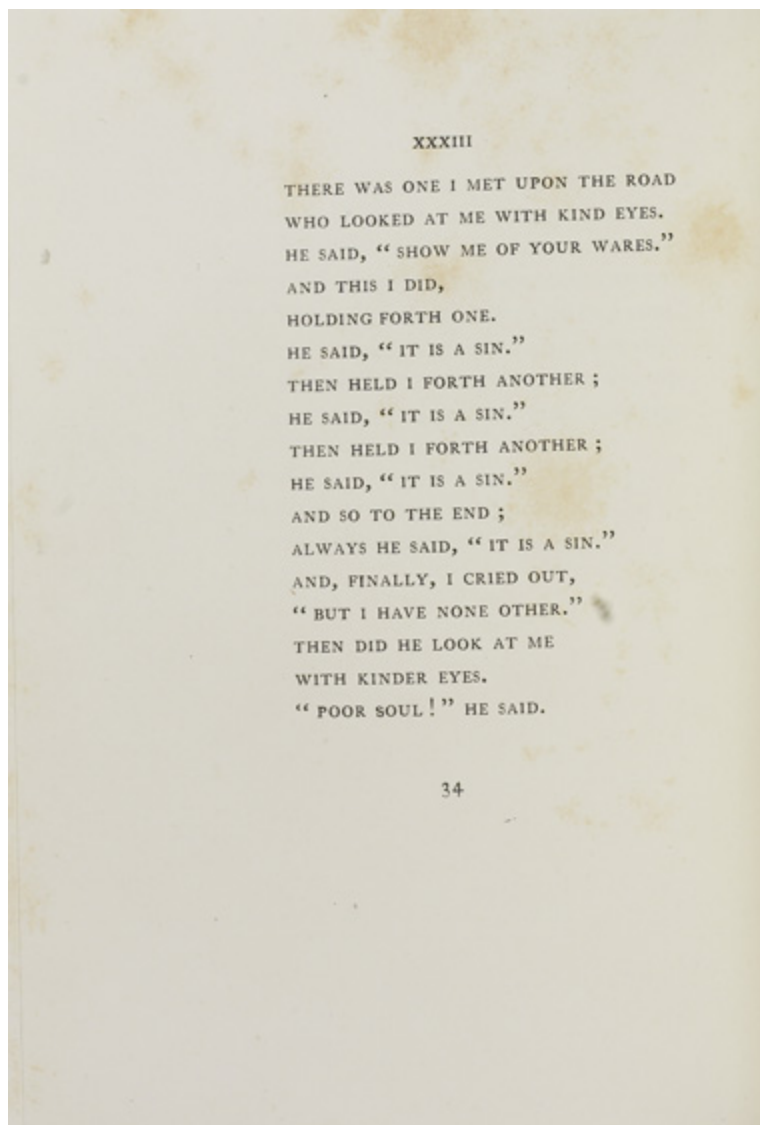
33

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LITTLE BLACK STREAMS OF PEOPLE

CAME AND WENT IN CONTINUALLY.
AND THE ANGELS WERE PUZZLED
TO KNOW WHY THE PEOPLE WENT THUS,
AND WHY THEY STAYED SO LONG WITHIN.

XXXIII



[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

THERE WAS ONE I MET UPON THE ROAD
WHO LOOKED AT ME WITH KIND EYES.
HE SAID, "SHOW ME OF YOUR WARES."
AND THIS I DID,
HOLDING FORTH ONE.
HE SAID, "IT IS A SIN."
THEN HELD I FORTH ANOTHER;
HE SAID, "IT IS A SIN."
THEN HELD I FORTH ANOTHER;
HE SAID, "IT IS A SIN."
AND SO TO THE END;
ALWAYS HE SAID, "IT IS A SIN."
AND, FINALLY, I CRIED OUT,
"BUT I HAVE NONE OTHER."
THEN DID HE LOOK AT ME
WITH KINDER EYES.
"POOR SOUL!" HE SAID.

XXXIV

XXXIV

I STOOD UPON A HIGHWAY,
AND, BEHOLD, THERE CAME
MANY STRANGE PEDLERS.
TO ME EACH ONE MADE GESTURES,
HOLDING FORTH LITTLE IMAGES, SAYING,
"THIS IS MY PATTERN OF GOD.
"NOW THIS IS THE GOD I PREFER."

BUT I SAID, "HENCE!
"LEAVE ME WITH MINE OWN,
"AND TAKE YOU YOURS AWAY;
"I CAN'T BUY OF YOUR PATTERNS OF GOD,
"THE LITTLE GODS YOU MAY RIGHTLY PREFER."

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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“I CAN’T BUY OF YOUR PATTERNS OF GOD,

“THE LITTLE GODS YOU MAY RIGHTLY PREFER.”

XXXV

XXXV

A MAN SAW A BALL OF GOLD IN THE SKY ;
HE CLIMBED FOR IT,
AND EVENTUALLY HE ACHIEVED IT —
IT WAS CLAY.

NOW THIS IS THE STRANGE PART :
WHEN THE MAN WENT TO THE EARTH
AND LOOKED AGAIN,
LO, THERE WAS THE BALL OF GOLD.
NOW THIS IS THE STRANGE PART :
IT WAS A BALL OF GOLD.
AYE, BY THE HEAVENS, IT WAS A BALL OF GOLD.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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NOW THIS IS THE STRANGE PART:

IT WAS A BALL OF GOLD.

AYE, BY THE HEAVENS, IT WAS A BALL OF GOLD.

XXXVI

I MET A SEER.
HE HELD IN HIS HANDS
THE BOOK OF WISDOM.
“SIR,” I ADDRESSED HIM,
“LET ME READ.”
“CHILD — ” HE BEGAN.
“SIR,” I SAID,
“THINK NOT THAT I AM A CHILD,
“FOR ALREADY I KNOW MUCH
“OF THAT WHICH YOU HOLD.
“AYE, MUCH.”

HE SMILED.
THEN HE OPENED THE BOOK
AND HELD IT BEFORE ME. —
STRANGE THAT I SHOULD HAVE GROWN SO
SUDDENLY BLIND.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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THEN HE OPENED THE BOOK

AND HELD IT BEFORE ME.—

STRANGE THAT I SHOULD HAVE GROWN SO SUDDENLY BLIND.

XXXVII

XXXVII

ON THE HORIZON THE PEAKS ASSEMBLED ;
AND AS I LOOKED,
THE MARCH OF THE MOUNTAINS BEGAN.
AS THEY MARCHED, THEY SANG,
“ AYE ! WE COME ! WE COME ! ”

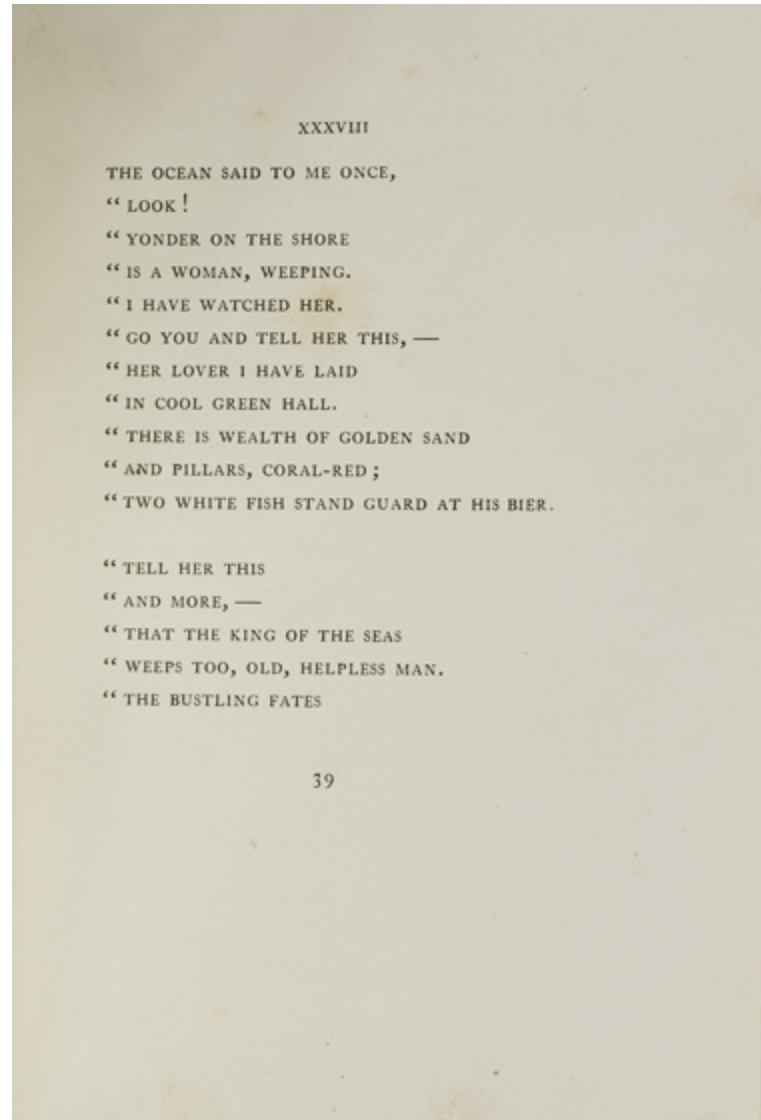
38

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ON THE HORIZON THE PEAKS ASSEMBLED;
AND AS I LOOKED,
THE MARCH OF THE MOUNTAINS BEGAN.
AS THEY MARCHED, THEY SANG,

“AYE! WE COME! WE COME!”

XXXVIII



[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

THE OCEAN SAID TO ME ONCE,

“LOOK!

“YONDER ON THE SHORE

“IS A WOMAN, WEEPING.

“I HAVE WATCHED HER.

“GO YOU AND TELL HER THIS,—

“HER LOVER I HAVE LAID

“IN COOL GREEN HALL.

“THERE IS WEALTH OF GOLDEN SAND

“AND PILLARS, CORAL-RED;

“TWO WHITE FISH STAND GUARD AT HIS BIER.

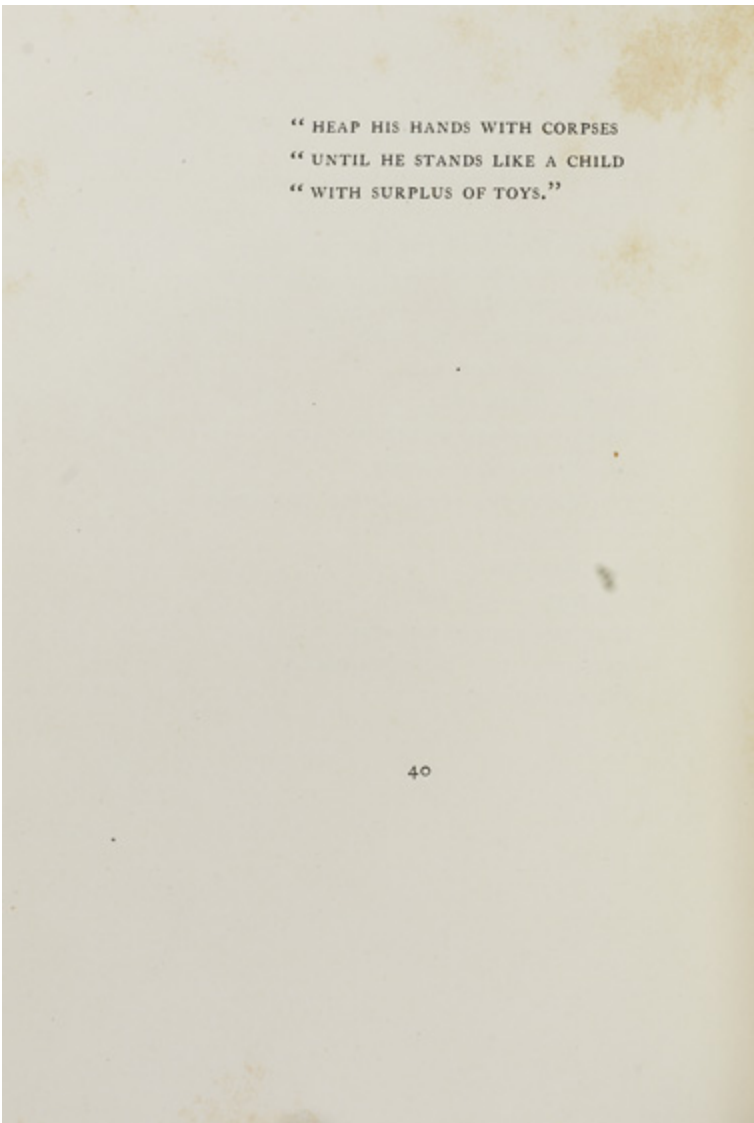
“TELL HER THIS

“AND MORE,—

“THAT THE KING OF THE SEAS

“WEEPS TOO, OLD, HELPLESS MAN.

“THE BUSTLING FATES



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“HEAP HIS HANDS WITH CORPSES

“UNTIL HE STANDS LIKE A CHILD

“WITH SURPLUS OF TOYS.”

XXXIX

THE LIVID LIGHTNINGS FLASHED IN THE
CLOUDS ;

THE LEADEN THUNDERS CRASHED.

A WORSHIPPER RAISED HIS ARM.

“ HEARKEN ! HEARKEN ! THE VOICE OF GOD ! ”

“ NOT SO,” SAID A MAN.

“ THE VOICE OF GOD WHISPERS IN THE HEART

“ SO SOFTLY

“ THAT THE SOUL PAUSES,

“ MAKING NO NOISE,

“ AND STRIVES FOR THESE MELODIES,

“ DISTANT, SIGHING, LIKE FAINTEST BREATH,

“ AND ALL THE BEING IS STILL TO HEAR.”

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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“AND ALL THE BEING IS STILL TO HEAR.”

XL

XL

AND YOU LOVE ME

I LOVE YOU.

YOU ARE, THEN, COLD COWARD.

AYE; BUT, BELOVED,
WHEN I STRIVE TO COME TO YOU,
MAN'S OPINIONS, A THOUSAND THICKETS,
MY INTERWOVEN EXISTENCE,
MY LIFE,
CAUGHT IN THE STUBBLE OF THE WORLD
LIKE A TENDER VEIL, —
THIS STAYS ME.
NO STRANGE MOVE CAN I MAKE
WITHOUT NOISE OF TEARING.
I DARE NOT.

IF LOVE LOVES,
THERE IS NO WORLD

42

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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AYE; BUT, BELOVED,

WHEN I STRIVE TO COME TO YOU,

MAN'S OPINIONS, A THOUSAND THICKETS,

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MY LIFE,

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THIS STAYS ME.

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I DARE NOT.

IF LOVE LOVES,

THERE IS NO WORLD

NOR WORD.
ALL IS LOST
SAVE THOUGHT OF LOVE
AND PLACE TO DREAM.
YOU LOVE ME?

I LOVE YOU.

YOU ARE, THEN, COLD COWARD.

AYE; BUT, BELOVED —

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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AYE; BUT, BELOVED—

XLI

XLI

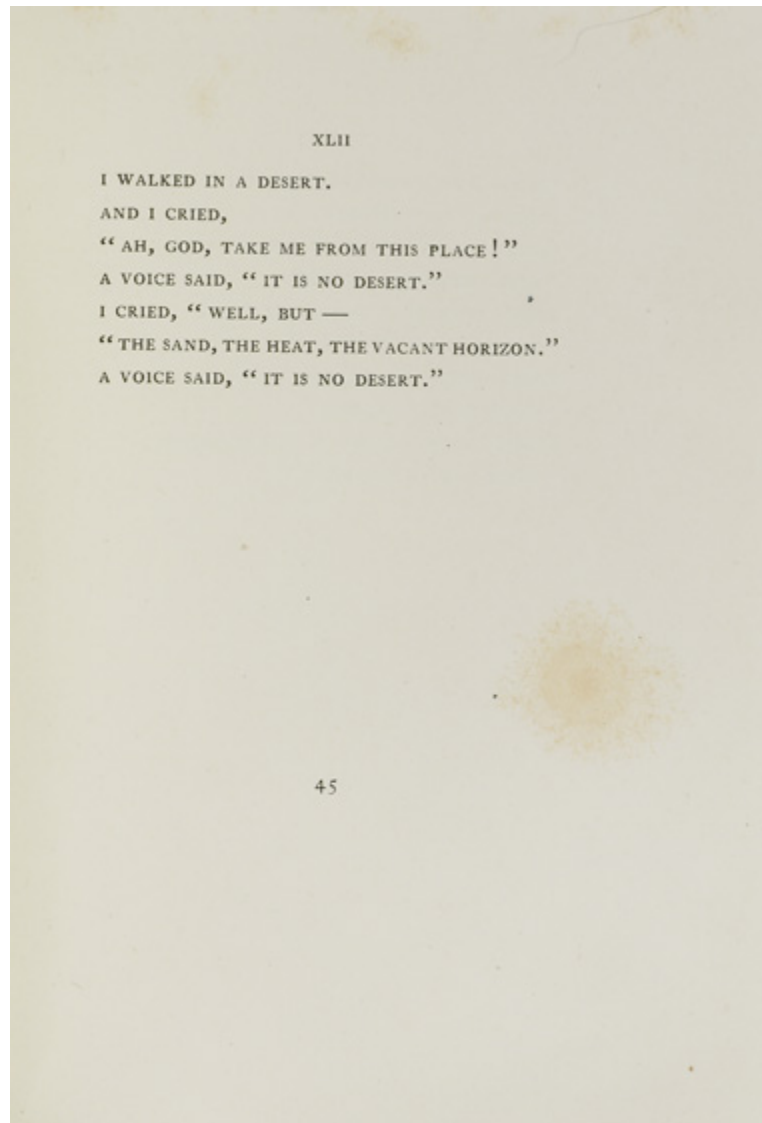
LOVE WALKED ALONE.
THE ROCKS CUT HER TENDER FEET,
AND THE BRAMBLES TORE HER FAIR LIMBS.
THERE CAME A COMPANION TO HER,
BUT, ALAS, HE WAS NO HELP,
FOR HIS NAME WAS HEART'S PAIN.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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XLII



[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

I WALKED IN A DESERT.

AND I CRIED,

“AH, GOD, TAKE ME FROM THIS PLACE!”

A VOICE SAID, “IT IS NO DESERT.”

I CRIED, “WELL, BUT—

“THE SAND, THE HEAT, THE VACANT HORIZON.”

A VOICE SAID, “IT IS NO DESERT.”

XLIII

XLIII

THERE CAME WHISPERINGS IN THE WINDS :

“GOOD-BYE ! GOOD-BYE !”

LITTLE VOICES CALLED IN THE DARKNESS :

“GOOD-BYE ! GOOD-BYE !”

THEN I STRETCHED FORTH MY ARMS.

“NO — NO —”

THERE CAME WHISPERINGS IN THE WIND :

“GOOD-BYE ! GOOD-BYE !”

LITTLE VOICES CALLED IN THE DARKNESS :

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[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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XLIV

XLIV

I WAS IN THE DARKNESS ;
I COULD NOT SEE MY WORDS
NOR THE WISHES OF MY HEART.
THEN SUDDENLY THERE WAS A GREAT LIGHT —

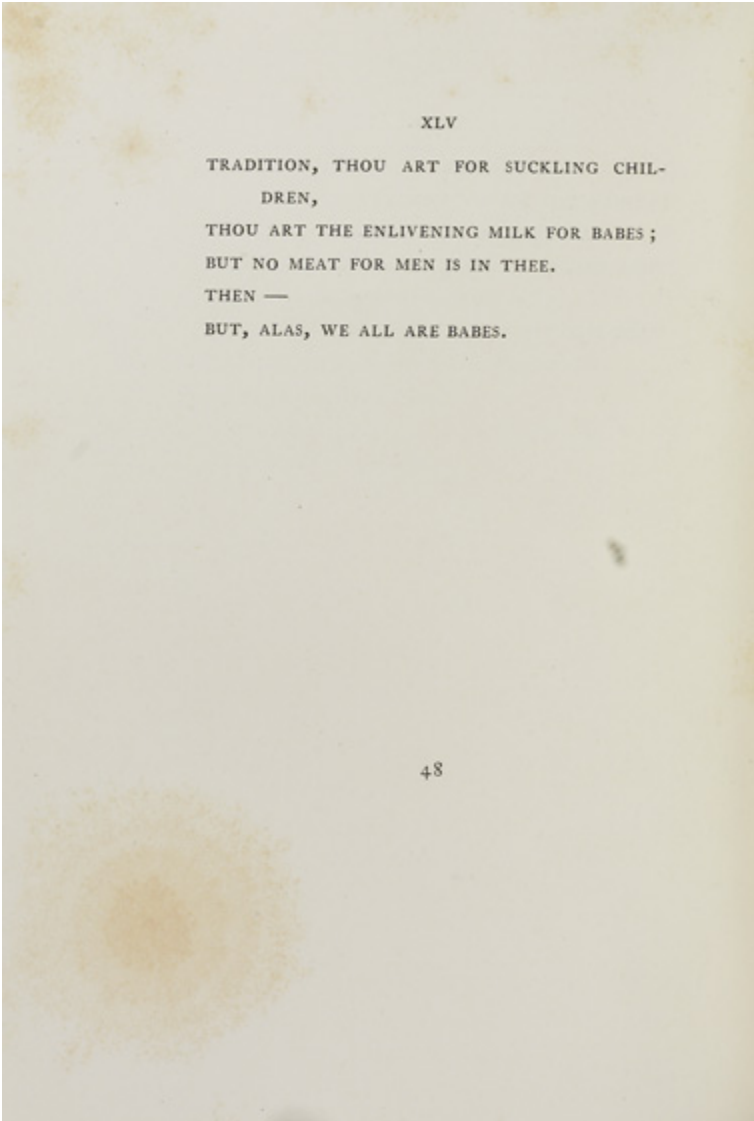
“LET ME INTO THE DARKNESS AGAIN.”

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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I COULD NOT SEE MY WORDS
NOR THE WISHES OF MY HEART.
THEN SUDDENLY THERE WAS A GREAT LIGHT—

“LET ME INTO THE DARKNESS AGAIN.”

XLV



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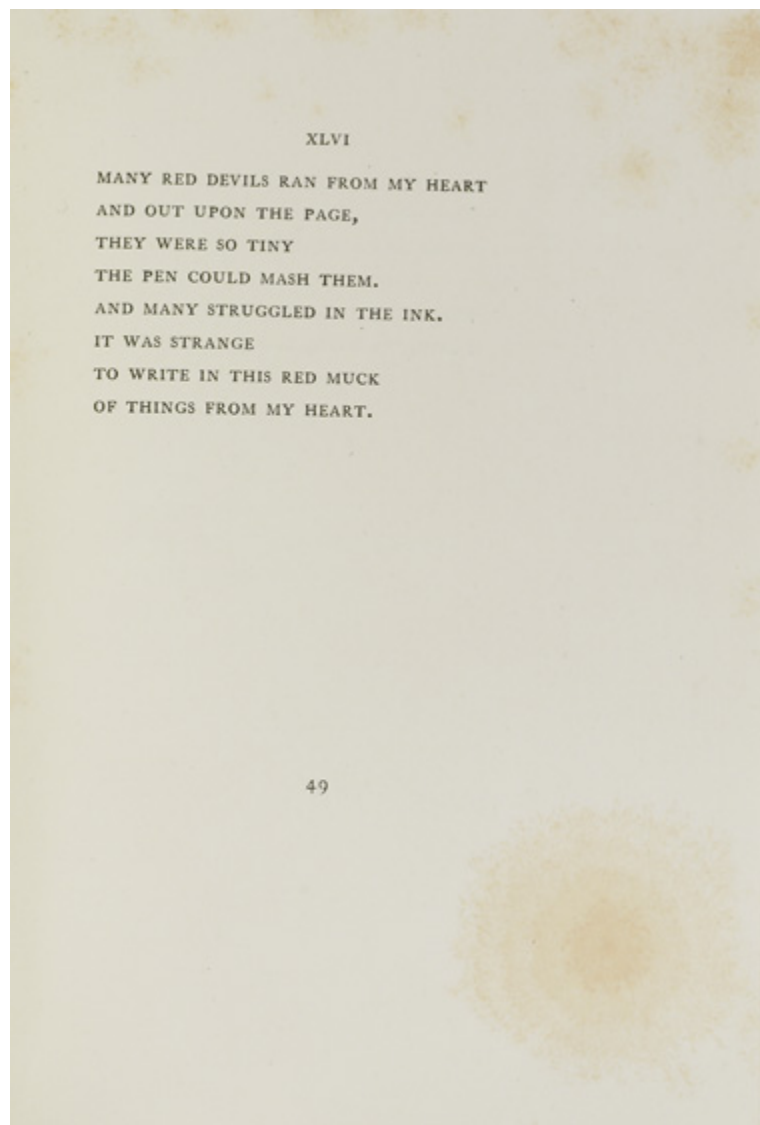
TRADITION, THOU ART FOR SUCKLING CHILDREN,

THOU ART THE ENLIVENING MILK FOR BABES;
BUT NO MEAT FOR MEN IS IN THEE.

THEN—

BUT, ALAS, WE ALL ARE BABES.

XLVI



[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

MANY RED DEVILS RAN FROM MY HEART
AND OUT UPON THE PAGE,
THEY WERE SO TINY
THE PEN COULD MASH THEM.
AND MANY STRUGGLED IN THE INK.
IT WAS STRANGE
TO WRITE IN THIS RED MUCK
OF THINGS FROM MY HEART.

XLVII

XLVII

“THINK AS I THINK,” SAID A MAN,
“OR YOU ARE ABOMINABLY WICKED ;
“YOU ARE A TOAD.”

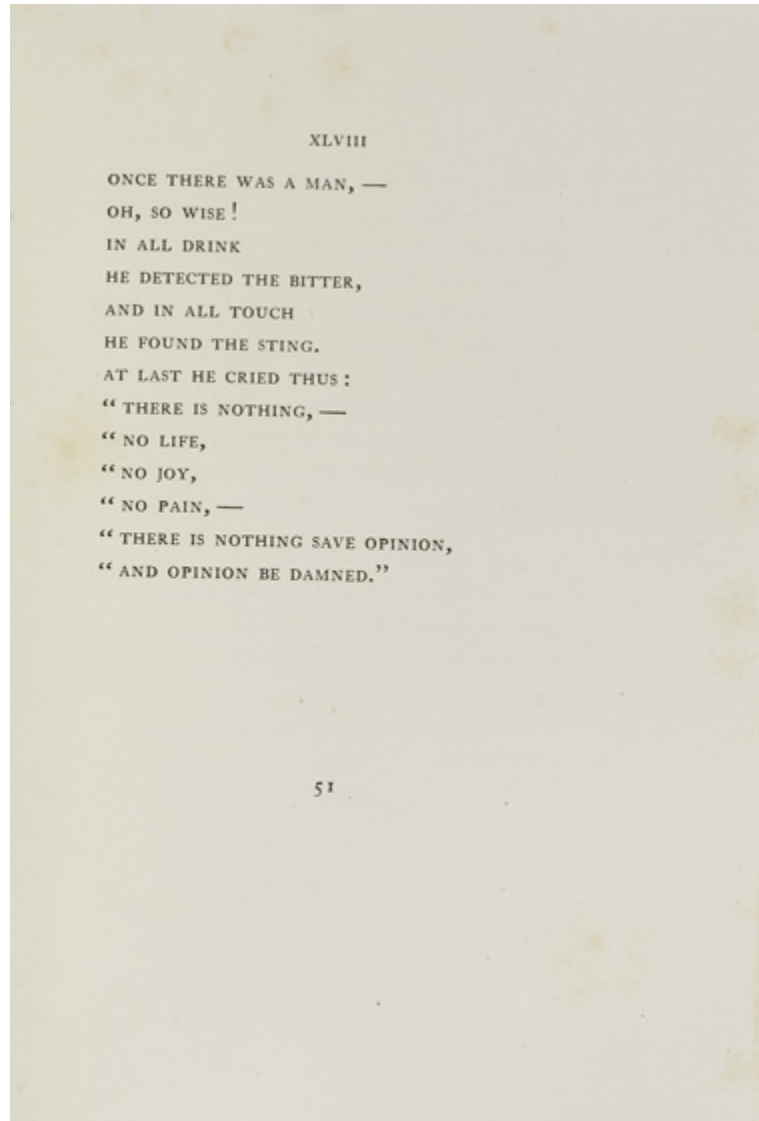
AND AFTER I HAD THOUGHT OF IT,
I SAID, “I WILL, THEN, BE A TOAD.”

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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“YOU ARE A TOAD.”

AND AFTER I HAD THOUGHT OF IT,
I SAID, "I WILL, THEN, BE A TOAD."

XLVIII



[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

ONCE THERE WAS A MAN,—

OH, SO WISE!

IN ALL DRINK

HE DETECTED THE BITTER,

AND IN ALL TOUCH

HE FOUND THE STING.

AT LAST HE CRIED THUS:

“THERE IS NOTHING,—

“NO LIFE,

“NO JOY,

“NO PAIN,—

“THERE IS NOTHING SAVE OPINION,

“AND OPINION BE DAMNED.”

XLIX

XLIX

I STOOD MUSING IN A BLACK WORLD,
NOT KNOWING WHERE TO DIRECT MY FEET.
AND I SAW THE QUICK STREAM OF MEN
POURING CEASELESSLY,
FILLED WITH EAGER FACES,
A TORRENT OF DESIRE.
I CALLED TO THEM,
“WHERE DO YOU GO? WHAT DO YOU SEE?”
A THOUSAND VOICES CALLED TO ME.
A THOUSAND FINGERS POINTED.
“LOOK! LOOK! THERE!”

I KNOW NOT OF IT.
BUT, LO! IN THE FAR SKY SHONE A RADIANCE
INEFFABLE, DIVINE, —
A VISION PAINTED UPON A PALL;
AND SOMETIMES IT WAS,
AND SOMETIMES IT WAS NOT.
I HESITATED.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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AND SOMETIMES IT WAS NOT.
I HESITATED.

THEN FROM THE STREAM
CAME ROARING VOICES,
IMPATIENT:
“LOOK! LOOK! THERE!”

SO AGAIN I SAW,
AND LEAPED, UNHESITANT,
AND STRUGGLED AND FUMED
WITH OUTSPREAD CLUTCHING FINGERS.
THE HARD HILLS TORE MY FLESH;
THE WAYS BIT MY FEET.
AT LAST I LOOKED AGAIN.
NO RADIANCE IN THE FAR SKY,
INEFFABLE, DIVINE;
NO VISION PAINTED UPON A PALL;
AND ALWAYS MY EYES ACHED FOR THE LIGHT.
THEN I CRIED IN DESPAIR,
“I SEE NOTHING! OH, WHERE DO I GO?”
THE TORRENT TURNED AGAIN ITS FACES:
“LOOK! LOOK! THERE!”

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

THEN FROM THE STREAM
CAME ROARING VOICES,
IMPATIENT:
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THEN I CRIED IN DESPAIR,
“I SEE NOTHING! OH, WHERE DO I GO?”
THE TORRENT TURNED AGAIN ITS FACES:
“LOOK! LOOK! THERE!”

AND AT THE BLINDNESS OF MY SPIRIT
THEY SCREAMED,
“ FOOL ! FOOL ! FOOL ! ”

54

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AND AT THE BLINDNESS OF MY SPIRIT
THEY SCREAMED,
FOOL ! FOOL ! FOOL ! ”

L

L

YOU SAY YOU ARE HOLY,
AND THAT
BECAUSE I HAVE NOT SEEN YOU SIN.
AYE, BUT THERE ARE THOSE
WHO SEE YOU SIN, MY FRIEND.

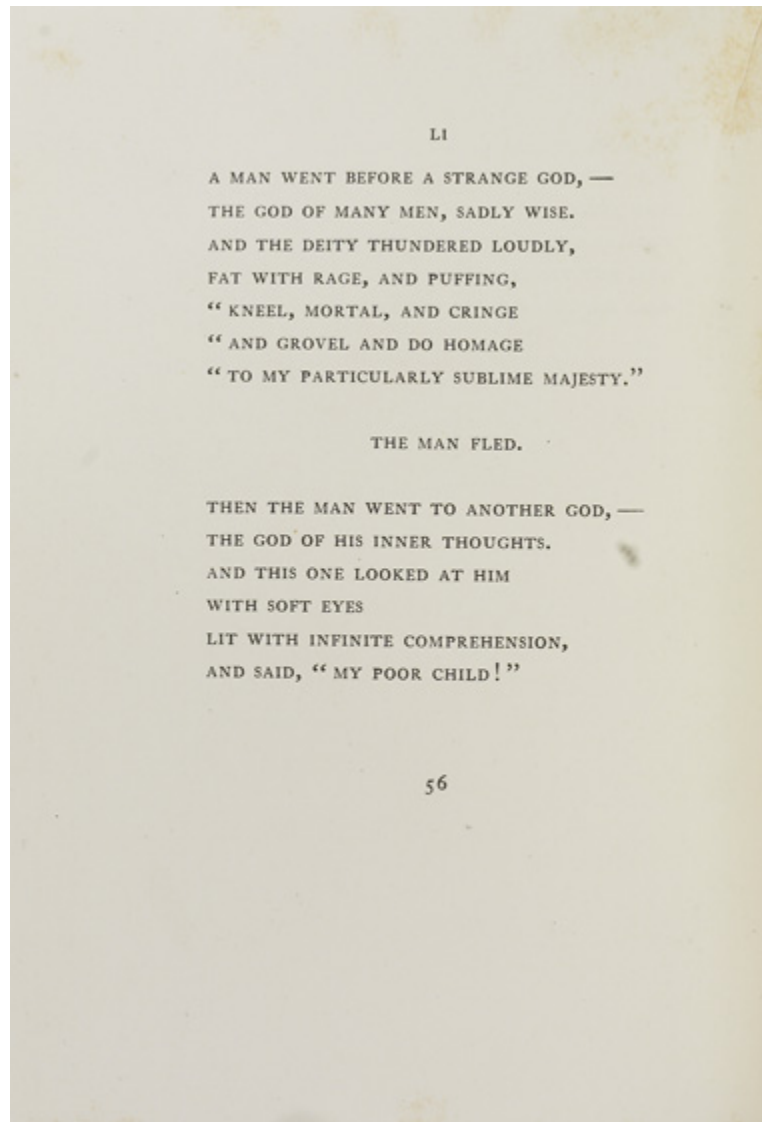
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AND THAT
BECAUSE I HAVE NOT SEEN YOU SIN.
AYE, BUT THERE ARE THOSE

WHO SEE YOU SIN, MY FRIEND.

LI



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A MAN WENT BEFORE A STRANGE GOD,—
THE GOD OF MANY MEN, SADLY WISE.

AND THE DEITY THUNDERED LOUDLY,
FAT WITH RAGE, AND PUFFING,
“KNEEL, MORTAL, AND CRINGE
“AND GROVEL AND DO HOMAGE
“TO MY PARTICULARLY SUBLIME MAJESTY.”

THE MAN FLED

THEN THE MAN WENT TO ANOTHER GOD,—
THE GOD OF HIS INNER THOUGHTS.
AND THIS ONE LOOKED AT HIM
WITH SOFT EYES
LIT WITH INFINITE COMPREHENSION,
AND SAID, “MY POOR CHILD!”

LII

WHY DO YOU STRIVE FOR GREATNESS, FOOL?
GO PLUCK A BOUGH AND WEAR IT.
IT IS AS SUFFICING.

MY LORD, THERE ARE CERTAIN BARBARIANS
WHO TILT THEIR NOSES
AS IF THE STARS WERE FLOWERS,
AND THY SERVANT IS LOST AMONG THEIR SHOE-
BUCKLES.
FAIN WOULD I HAVE MINE EYES EVEN WITH
THEIR EYES.

FOOL, GO PLUCK A BOUGH AND WEAR IT.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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FOOL, GO PLUCK A BOUGH AND WEAR IT.

LIII

LIII

I

BLUSTERING GOD,
STAMPING ACROSS THE SKY
WITH LOUD SWAGGER,
I FEAR YOU NOT.
NO, THOUGH FROM YOUR HIGHEST HEAVEN
YOU PLUNGE YOUR SPEAR AT MY HEART,
I FEAR YOU NOT.
NO, NOT IF THE BLOW
IS AS THE LIGHTNING BLASTING A TREE,
I FEAR YOU NOT, PUFFING BRAGGART.

II

IF THOU CAN SEE INTO MY HEART
THAT I FEAR THEE NOT,
THOU WILT SEE WHY I FEAR THEE NOT,
AND WHY IT IS RIGHT.

58

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I

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AND WHY IT IS RIGHT.

SO THREATEN NOT, THOU, WITH THY BLOODY
SPEARS,
ELSE THY SUBLIME EARS SHALL HEAR CURSES.

III

WITHAL, THERE IS ONE WHOM I FEAR ;
I FEAR TO SEE GRIEF UPON THAT FACE.
PERCHANCE, FRIEND, HE IS NOT YOUR GOD ;
IF SO, SPIT UPON HIM.
BY IT YOU WILL DO NO PROFANITY.
BUT I —
AH, SOONER WOULD I DIE
THAN SEE TEARS IN THOSE EYES OF MY SOUL.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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LIV

LIV

"IT WAS WRONG TO DO THIS," SAID THE ANGEL.

"YOU SHOULD LIVE LIKE A FLOWER,

"HOLDING MALICE LIKE A PUPPY,

"WAGING WAR LIKE A LAMBKIN."

"NOT SO," QUOTH THE MAN

WHO HAD NO FEAR OF SPIRITS ;

"IT IS ONLY WRONG FOR ANGELS

"WHO CAN LIVE LIKE THE FLOWERS,

"HOLDING MALICE LIKE THE PUPPIES,

"WAGING WAR LIKE THE LAMBKINS."

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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“WAGING WAR LIKE THE LAMBKINS.”

LV

A MAN TOILED ON A BURNING ROAD,
 NEVER RESTING.
 ONCE HE SAW A FAT, STUPID ASS
 GRINNING AT HIM FROM A GREEN PLACE.
 THE MAN CRIED OUT IN RAGE,
 "AH! DO NOT DERIDE ME, FOOL!
 "I KNOW YOU —
 "ALL DAY STUFFING YOUR BELLY,
 "BURYING YOUR HEART
 "IN GRASS AND TENDER SPROUTS:
 "IT WILL NOT SUFFICE YOU."
 BUT THE ASS ONLY GRINNED AT HIM FROM
 THE GREEN PLACE.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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LVI

LVI

A MAN FEARED THAT HE MIGHT FIND AN
ASSASSIN ;
ANOTHER THAT HE MIGHT FIND A VICTIM.
ONE WAS MORE WISE THAN THE OTHER.

62

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A MAN FEARED THAT HE MIGHT FIND AN ASSASSIN;
ANOTHER THAT HE MIGHT FIND A VICTIM.
ONE WAS MORE WISE THAN THE OTHER.

LVII

LVII

WITH EYE AND WITH GESTURE
YOU SAY YOU ARE HOLY.
I SAY YOU LIE;
FOR I DID SEE YOU
DRAW AWAY YOUR COATS
FROM THE SIN UPON THE HANDS
OF A LITTLE CHILD.
LIAR!

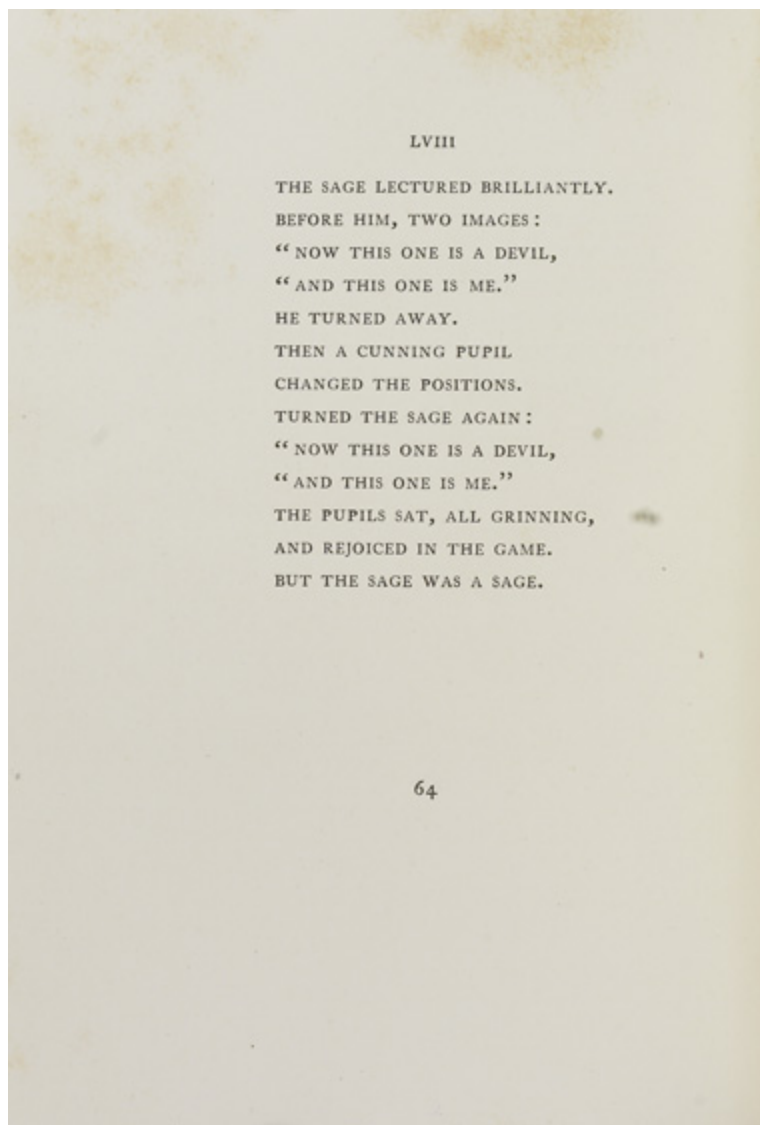
63

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WITH EYE AND WITH GESTURE
YOU SAY YOU ARE HOLY.
I SAY YOU LIE;
FOR I DID SEE YOU

DRAW AWAY YOUR COATS
FROM THE SIN UPON THE HANDS
OF A LITTLE CHILD.
LIAR!

LVIII



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THE SAGE LECTURED BRILLIANTLY.

BEFORE HIM, TWO IMAGES:

“NOW THIS ONE IS A DEVIL,

“AND THIS ONE IS ME.”

HE TURNED AWAY.

THEN A CUNNING PUPIL

CHANGED THE POSITIONS.

TURNED THE SAGE AGAIN:

“NOW THIS ONE IS A DEVIL,

“AND THIS ONE IS ME.”

THE PUPILS SAT, ALL GRINNING,

AND REJOICED IN THE GAME.

BUT THE SAGE WAS A SAGE.

LIX

LIX

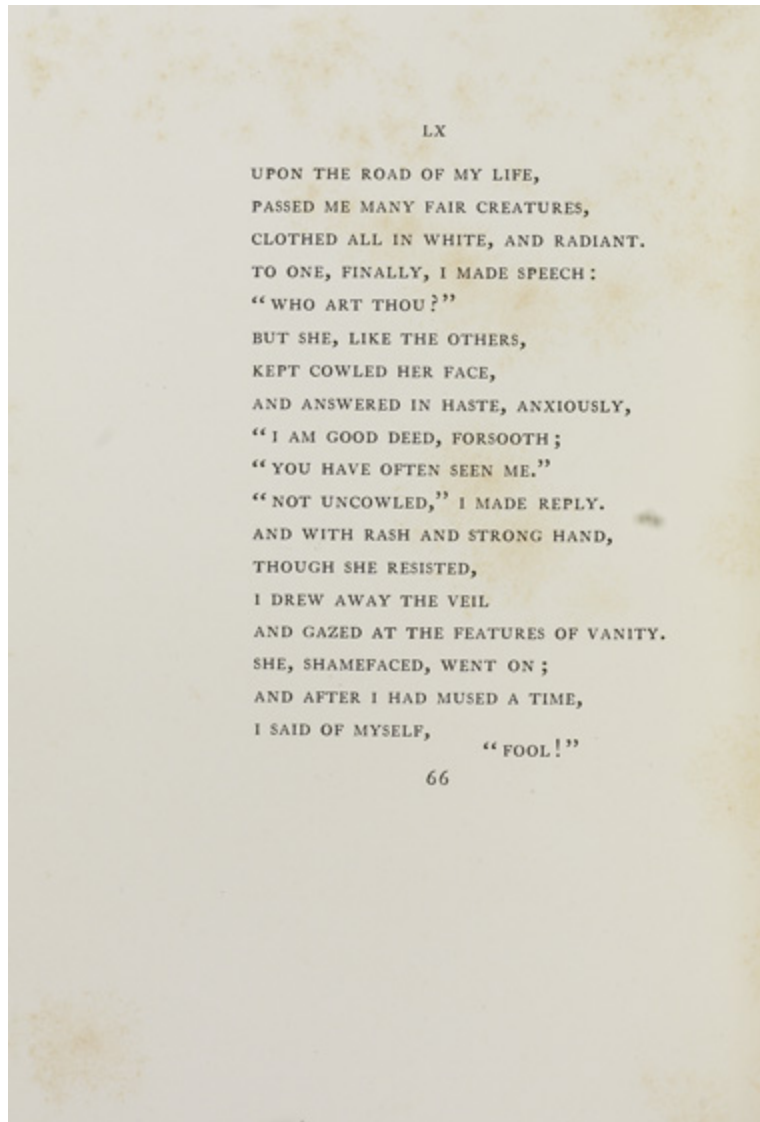
WALKING IN THE SKY,
A MAN IN STRANGE BLACK GARB
ENCOUNTERED A RADIANT FORM.
THEN HIS STEPS WERE EAGER ;
BOWED HE DEVOUTLY.
“MY LORD,” SAID HE.
BUT THE SPIRIT KNEW HIM NOT.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

WALKING IN THE SKY,
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THEN HIS STEPS WERE EAGER;

BOWED HE DEVOUTLY,
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BUT THE SPIRIT KNEW HIM NOT.

LX



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UPON THE ROAD OF MY LIFE,
PASSED ME MANY FAIR CREATURES,
CLOTHED ALL IN WHITE, AND RADIANT.
TO ONE, FINALLY, I MADE SPEECH:
“WHO ART THOU?”
BUT SHE, LIKE THE OTHERS,
KEPT COWLED HER FACE,
AND ANSWERED IN HASTE, ANXIOUSLY,
“I AM GOOD DEED, FORSOOTH;
“YOU HAVE OFTEN SEEN ME.”
“NOT UNCOWLED,” I MADE REPLY.
AND WITH RASH AND STRONG HAND,
THOUGH SHE RESISTED,
I DREW AWAY THE VEIL
AND GAZED AT THE FEATURES OF VANITY.
SHE, SHAMEFACED, WENT ON;
AND AFTER I HAD MUSED A TIME,
I SAID OF MYSELF,
“FOOL!”

LXI

LXI

I

THERE WAS A MAN AND A WOMAN
WHO SINNED.
THEN DID THE MAN HEAP THE PUNISHMENT
ALL UPON THE HEAD OF HER,
AND WENT AWAY GAYLY.

II

THERE WAS A MAN AND A WOMAN
WHO SINNED.
AND THE MAN STOOD WITH HER.
AS UPON HER HEAD, SO UPON HIS,
FELL BLOW AND BLOW,
AND ALL PEOPLE SCREAMING, "FOOL!"
HE WAS A BRAVE HEART.

67

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

I

THERE WAS A MAN AND A WOMAN
WHO SINNED.

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FELL BLOW AND BLOW,
AND ALL PEOPLE SCREAMING, "FOOL!"
HE WAS A BRAVE HEART.

III

HE WAS A BRAVE HEART.
WOULD YOU SPEAK WITH HIM, FRIEND?
WELL, HE IS DEAD,
AND THERE WENT YOUR OPPORTUNITY.
LET IT BE YOUR GRIEF
THAT HE IS DEAD
AND YOUR OPPORTUNITY GONE;
FOR, IN THAT, YOU WERE A COWARD.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

III

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WOULD YOU SPEAK WITH HIM, FRIEND?

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AND THERE WENT YOUR OPPORTUNITY.

LET IT BE YOUR BRIEF

THAT HE IS DEAD

AND YOUR OPPORTUNITY GONE;

FOR, IN THAT, YOU WERE A COWARD.

LXII

LXII

THERE WAS A MAN WHO LIVED A LIFE OF FIRE.
EVEN UPON THE FABRIC OF TIME,
WHERE PURPLE BECOMES ORANGE
AND ORANGE PURPLE,
THIS LIFE GLOWED,
A DIRE RED STAIN, INDELIBLE ;
YET WHEN HE WAS DEAD,
HE SAW THAT HE HAD NOT LIVED.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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EVEN UPON THE FABRIC OF TIME,
WHERE PURPLE BECOMES ORANGE
AND ORANGE PURPLE,
THIS LIFE GLOWED,
A DIRE RED STAIN, INDELIBLE;
YET WHEN HE WAS DEAD,
HE SAW THAT HE HAD NOT LIVED.

LXIII

LXIII

THERE WAS A GREAT CATHEDRAL.
TO SOLEMN SONGS,
A WHITE PROCESSION
MOVED TOWARD THE ALTAR.
THE CHIEF MAN THERE
WAS ERECT, AND BORE HIMSELF PROUDLY.
YET SOME COULD SEE HIM CRINGE,
AS IN A PLACE OF DANGER,
THROWING FRIGHTENED GLANCES INTO THE AIR,
A-START AT THREATENING FACES OF THE PAST.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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THROWING FRIGHTENED GLANCES INTO THE AIR,
A-START AT THREATENING FACES OF THE PAST.

LXIV

LXIV

FRIEND, YOUR WHITE BEARD SWEEPS THE
GROUND.

WHY DO YOU STAND, EXPECTANT?
DO YOU HOPE TO SEE IT
IN ONE OF YOUR WITHERED DAYS?
WITH YOUR OLD EYES
DO YOU HOPE TO SEE
THE TRIUMPHAL MARCH OF JUSTICE?
DO NOT WAIT, FRIEND?
TAKE YOUR WHITE BEARD
AND YOUR OLD EYES
TO MORE TENDER LANDS.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

FRIEND, YOUR WHITE BEARD SWEEPS THE GROUND.

WHY DO YOU STAND, EXPECTANT?

DO YOU HOPE TO SEE IT

IN ONE OF YOUR WITHERED DAYS?

WITH OUR OLD EYES
DO YOU HOPE TO SEE
THE TRIUMPHAL MARCH OF JUSTICE?
DO NOT WAIT, FRIEND?
TAKE YOUR WHITE BEARD
AND YOUR OLD EYES
TO MORE TENDER LANDS.

LXV

ONCE, I KNEW A FINE SONG,
— IT IS TRUE, BELIEVE ME, —
IT WAS ALL OF BIRDS,
AND I HELD THEM IN A BASKET ;
WHEN I OPENED THE WICKET,
HEAVENS ! THEY ALL FLEW AWAY.
I CRIED, “ COME BACK, LITTLE THOUGHTS ! ”
BUT THEY ONLY LAUGHED.
THEY FLEW ON
UNTIL THEY WERE AS SAND
THROWN BETWEEN ME AND THE SKY.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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BUT THEY ONLY LAUGHED.
THEY FLEW ON
UNTIL THEY WERE AS SAND
THROWN BETWEEN ME AND THE SKY.

LXVI

IF I SHOULD CAST OFF THIS TATTERED COAT,
AND GO FREE INTO THE MIGHTY SKY;
IF I SHOULD FIND NOTHING THERE
BUT A VAST BLUE,
ECHOLESS, IGNORANT, —
WHAT THEN ?

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

IF I SHOULD CAST OFF THIS TATTERED COAT,
AND GO FREE INTO THE MIGHTY SKY;
IF I SHOULD FIND NOTHING THERE
BUT A VAST BLUE,

ECHOLESS, IGNORANT,—

WHAT THEN!

LXVII

LXVII

GOD LAY DEAD IN HEAVEN ;
ANGELS SANG THE HYMN OF THE END ;
PURPLE WINDS WENT MOANING,
THEIR WINGS DRIP-DRIPPING
WITH BLOOD
THAT FELL UPON THE EARTH.
IT, GROANING THING,
TURNED BLACK AND SANK.
THEN FROM THE FAR CAVERNS
OF DEAD SINS
CAME MONSTERS, LIVID WITH DESIRE.
THEY FOUGHT,
WRANGLLED OVER THE WORLD,
A MORSEL.
BUT OF ALL SADNESS THIS WAS SAD, —
A WOMAN'S ARMS TRIED TO SHIELD
THE HEAD OF A SLEEPING MAN
FROM THE JAWS OF THE FINAL BEAST.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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THE HEAD OF A SLEEPING MAN
FROM THE JAWS OF THE FINAL BEAST.

LXVIII

LXVIII

A SPIRIT SPED
THROUGH SPACES OF NIGHT;
AND AS HE SPED, HE CALLED,
“GOD! GOD!”
HE WENT THROUGH VALLEYS
OF BLACK DEATH-SLIME,
EVER CALLING,
“GOD! GOD!”
THEIR ECHOES
FROM CREVICE AND CAVERN
MOCKED HIM:
“GOD! GOD! GOD!”
FLEETLY INTO THE PLAINS OF SPACE
HE WENT, EVER CALLING,
“GOD! GOD!”
EVENTUALLY, THEN, HE SCREAMED,
MAD IN DENIAL,
“AH, THERE IS NO GOD!”

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

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THROUGH SPACES OF NIGHT;
AND AS HE SPED, HE CALLED,
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HE WENT, EVER CALLING,

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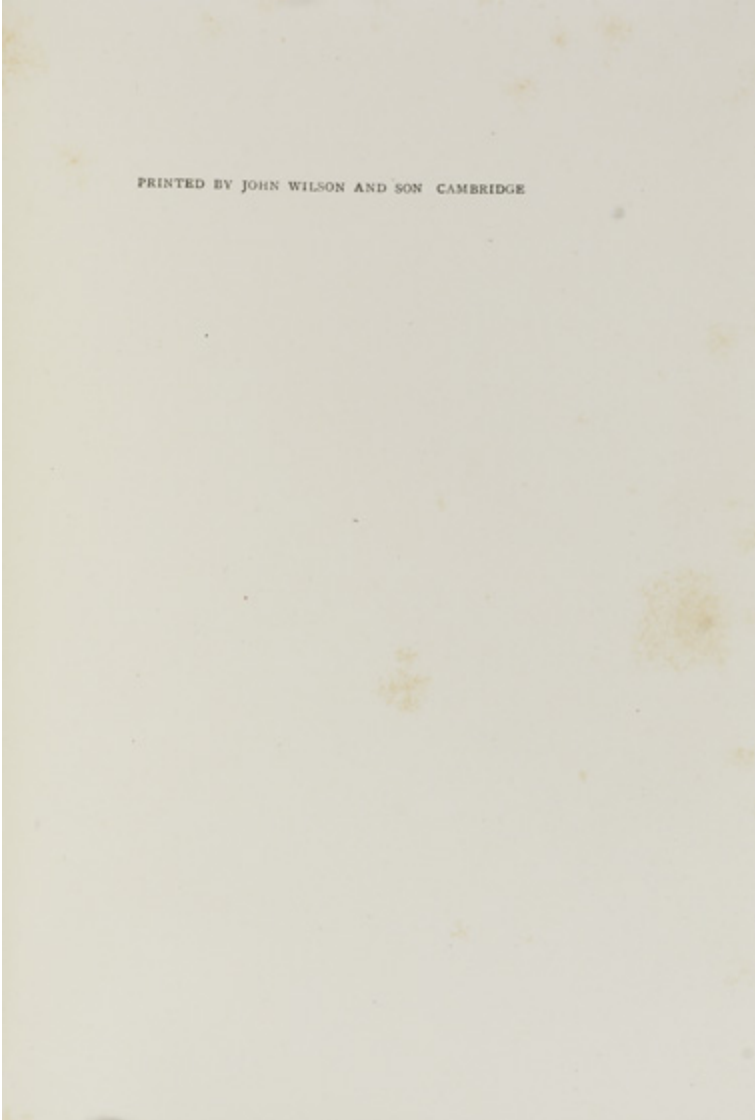
MAD IN DENIAL,

“AH, THERE IS NO GOD!”

A SWIFT HAND,
A SWORD FROM THE SKY,
SMOTE HIM,
AND HE WAS DEAD.

[View a high-resolution scan of the original page.](#)

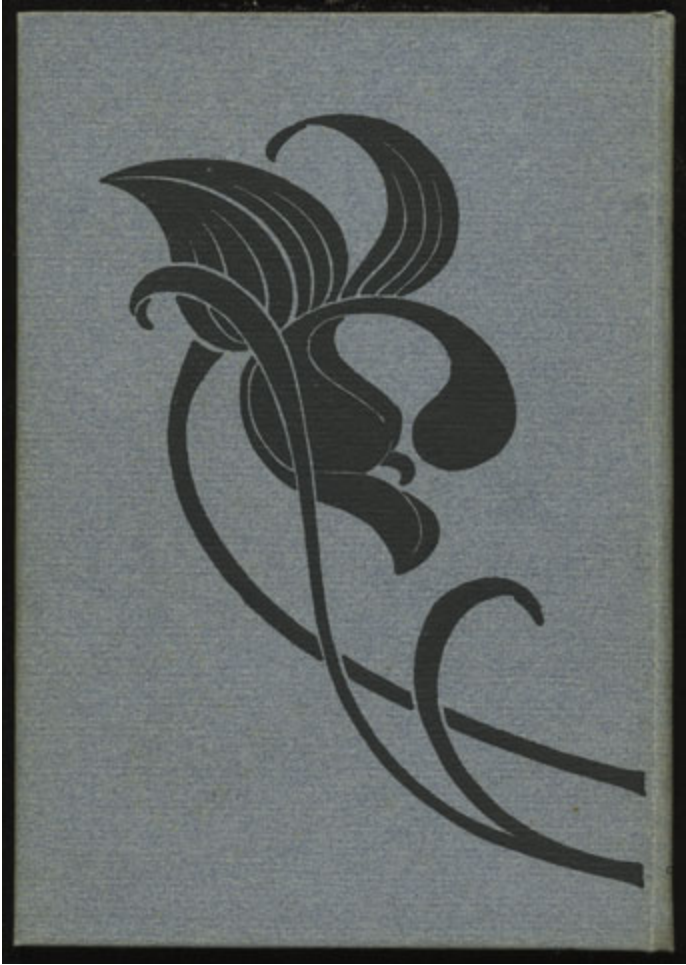
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A SWORD FROM THE SKY,
SMOTE HIM,
AND HE WAS DEAD.



PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON AND SON CAMBRIDGE

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[View a high-resolution scan of the original back cover](#)

Afterword

Jerome McGann's Afterword to the Rice University Press facsimile edition of Crane's "Black Riders and other lines."

[missing_resource: <http://rup.rice.edu/image/riders-buybutton.jpg>]

Stephen Crane and "The Black Riders and other lines"

To genius must always go two gifts, the thought and the publication. The first is revelation, always a miracle. . . . But to make it available, it needs a vehicle or art by which it is conveyed to men. (R. W. Emerson, "Intellect")

I

There are four books published in the nineteenth century that define the shape of American poetry. First is Poe's 1845 volume *The Raven and Other Poems*, then Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), then the posthumous *Poems by Emily Dickinson* (1890), and finally Stephen Crane's *The Black Riders and other lines*, published in 1895. The significance of the first three is well known and has been extensively discussed. Not so Crane's book. Its importance is less recognized partly because he is, with good reason, celebrated as a prose writer and not as a poet. But there is another, equally good and equally important, reason.

Unlike the other three volumes, Crane's book is notable less as a collection of poetical works than as a book whose graphic design was created as "an echo to the sense" of Crane's texts.

Something like that might also be said—has been said—of Whitman's and Dickinson's volumes. We know that Whitman was much concerned with the design of his book, and Dickinson's first volume would become notorious for the ways its editors, Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Higginson, reshaped Dickinson's strange and wonderful manuscript texts for their appearance in print. But the case of Crane's book is quite different.

The Black Riders and other lines is the first American book printed with a clear Modernist design. Its publisher was the adventurous new Boston firm Copeland and Day, consciously founded in 1893 as an American exponent

for the innovative ventures in graphic and typographic design begun in England in the mid-1880s (see Frankel, Hammond, McGann, Nelson, and Stetz). Herbert Copeland and Fred Day moved in a circle of young Americans, men and women, who were enthusiasts of the revolution in art and literature that began in the 1850s with the Rossetti circle and the founding of *The Germ* and Morris's *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, and climaxed in the 1890s of Wilde and Beardsley, Ricketts and Shannon, *The Hobby Horse*, *The Dial*, and *The Yellow Book*. The firm began its operations sometime in 1893, largely through the efforts of its leading sponsor Fred Day, who had begun to cultivate important connections with the London literary and publishing world: with William Heinemann, J. W. Dent, and particularly with John Lane and Charles Elkin Mathews, the publishers of The Bodley Head.

Copeland and Day signaled their allegiances with an elegant bookplate designed by Charles Ricketts and the announcement of their first set of publications. These included a portfolio of Walter Crane designs illustrating *The Tempest*, the American printing of *The Hobby Horse* and of Wilde and Beardsley's *Salome*, an Aesthetic manifesto by Ralph Adams Cram titled *The Decadent: Being the Gospel of Inaction*, and a Kelmscott-inspired edition of Rossetti's *House of Life*. These works began appearing early in 1894.

So far as Crane's book is concerned, the decisive event came sometime in mid-1894 when Copeland and Day agreed to be the American distributor of Wilde's new work, *The Sphinx*, designed by Charles Ricketts. Commenting on the arresting typographical design of the book, Ricketts observed that the "unusual length of the lines" of Wilde's verse led him "away from the Renaissance towards a book marked by surviving classical traits, printing it in Capitals" (Ricketts 25), with a consequent allusion to Greek and Roman majuscule lettering. In fact, the book's principal text was printed in small caps with the stanza headings in large cap roman numbers. The *Black Riders* volume has the same typographical design. Moreover, Copeland and Day's rationale for choosing that design follows Ricketts so closely that there must have been direct communication between the English and Americans about these two books.

Shortly after Copeland and Day began distributing *The Sphinx*, they were approached by John Barry, editor of the *Forum* magazine, about publishing a set of unusual prose poems by the young and relatively unknown writer Stephen Crane. Hamlin Garland showed Barry a sheaf of some thirty of Crane's poems in early April 1894, and Barry was so impressed that he read some at the Uncut Leaves Society meeting of 14 April, and soon afterwards "fired them off to Copeland and Day (Garland, 195). The publishers agreed to take Crane's work sometime during the next two or three months—the exact date is uncertain, but Crane wrote to them in the summer, perhaps August, asking whether the publication would be "all under way by early fall": "I have not heard from you in some time [and] am in the dark in regard to your intentions" (*Correspondence* I. 72).

At that point discussions began in earnest. During September and October 1894, Crane and his publishers argued about whether some of the poems should be omitted as too incendiary. Protesting that the publishers' proposed cuts would remove "all the ethical sense out of the book," Crane argued that "It is the anarchy which I insist on" (letter of 9 September). As author and publisher wrangled about the precise contents of the book, other publication decisions were being made. The received title was Crane's suggestion, reflecting as it does Crane's view that these works should not be called "poems" but "lines or pills" (*Correspondence* I. 171). For their part, Copeland and Day wanted illustrations for the book, so on 19 October they sent Crane—along with a list of seven works they wanted removed—"a couple of drawings either of which might please you to be used by way of frontispiece for the book; one would be something illustrative, while the other would be symbolic in a wide sense" (*Correspondence* I. 76).

Crane and his publishers came to an agreement about the book's contents shortly after this letter from Copeland and Day. A portion of the correspondence is clearly missing, however, for the next letter we have is from Crane to the publisher (30 October) enclosing "copy of the title poem." Copeland and Day's response (31 October) shows that Crane must have written to the publishers about the drawings they sent on 19 October: "as yet the drawings have not come to hand: neither new ones nor those we forwarded you. Kindly advise us whether others are being made up." Crane moved in a circle of artists and book illustrators in New York and he

apparently suggested to his publishers that one of them might illustrate the book—an event Crane tried to effect during the next several months. Crane's friend Frederick Gordon was engaged in January to submit drawings for the covers and title page.

After inquiring about the drawings, Copeland and Day turned to the issue of the book's general design.

"The form in which we intend to print *The Black Riders* is more severely classic than any book yet issued in America, and owing to the scarcity of types it will be quite impossible to set up more than a dozen pages at a time. Of course you wish to see proof for correction, but we would ask whether you wish the punctuation of copy followed implicitly or the recognized authorities on pointing of America or England?"

The passage clearly shows that Copeland and Day were thinking of a design that keyed off the design Ricketts created for *The Sphinx*. The decision to print the entire text in small caps made it "impossible to set up more than a dozen pages at a time." Each of the book's "lines" would be set high in the page and headed with a Roman numeral in large caps. The English influence is particularly clear in the query about whether Crane wanted to follow American or English punctuation conventions.

The publishers held off typesetting until they had a reply from Crane. After some delay he wrote (10 December) an important and revealing response:

"I have grown somewhat frightened at the idea of old English type since some of my recent encounters with it have made me think I was working out a puzzle. Please reassure me on the point. . . . (letter of 10 December)"

Crane was clearly misinterpreting Copeland and Day's remark about a "more severely classic" design. He thought they were referring to the highly ornamental style ("old English type") that he would have known, for instance, from their own recent Kelmscott-influenced edition of Rossetti. But that gothic approach to design was precisely what Copeland and Day were veering away from, and why they saw the book as unlike "any book yet issued in America."

Evidently Copeland and Day succeeded in reassuring Crane, for on 16 December he wrote back that “The type, the page, the classic form of the sample suits me,” and he gave the publishers leave to choose the style of punctuation. Typesetting began in December and continued for some months, with surviving proofs showing trial variations on their “classic” approach.

They also began working with Crane’s friend, the book artist Frederick Gordon, on drawings for the covers, a title page, and a possible frontispiece. In late January or early February, Gordon submitted a stunning design for spine and covers with an orchid motif, adding in his letter that “The orchid, with its strange habits, extraordinary forms and curious properties, seemed to me the most appropriate floral motive, an idea in which Mr. Crane concurred before he left New York. . . . Will you kindly let me know whether it suits your requirements?” (*Correspondence* I. 89n. The publishers wrote back that they wanted the design modified, but Gordon’s schedule prevented him from undertaking the revisions, so the task fell to an artist chosen by Copeland and Day.

Typesetting and proofing of the text carried on into late January and perhaps beyond, as did proofing of the art work and the printing of the publication announcements. An edition of five hundred copies was ordered (price \$1) with fifty extra specially bound copies on Japan paper and printed in green ink. The book was announced in *Publishers’ Weekly* on 11 May 1895. Sometime in 1896 a second edition was issued—called the “THIRD EDITION” on the verso of its title page—with a title page imprint “BOSTON COPELAND AND DAY MDCCCXCVI | LONDON WILLIAM HEINEMANN.” Actually the second edition, it was perhaps so identified because of the fifty copies printed on Japan paper. On 14 November, Heinemann released their own edition (price 3 shillings) from sheets printed in the United States but with their own title page and half title.

II

When Crane was writing his poems and showing them to friends and acquaintances, the responses were as split as they would be when the book

was released to the reviewers. “There was clash and clang of spear and shield” of admirers and detractors, an understandable result given the deliberately arresting character of the texts, on the one hand, and of their graphical presentation on the other. Indeed, Copeland and Day’s design represents the first public act of interpretation that Crane’s “lines” received.

The design’s chief move was to give an abstract inflection to the texts, as if they were not to be read as the works of a poet but as a set of quasi-absolute, prophetic inscriptions. The signature lines that open the book are entirely characteristic:

black riders came from the sea.

there was clash and clang of spear and shield,

and clash and clang of hoof and heel,

wild shouts and the wave of hair

in the rush upon the wind:

thus the ride of sin.

By calling attention to itself as a textual presence (rather than a vehicle of linguistic reference), the typography turns the lines back into themselves, leading one to identify the “black riders” with their immediate typographical unfolding. This move simultaneously evacuates the texts of the subjectivity that poetry, particularly romantic poetry, commonly asks the reader to expect. The effect is particularly forceful because this initial text avoids an explicit first-person grammar.

When such a grammar is finally invoked—in numbers III and IV—we observe the subjective poet begin to disappear into his forms of expression. This process is first signaled in number II, when we meet a line of “three little birds in a row.” These are plainly figured as symbolic of poetic expression—they “sat musing” —and they come here to laugh at a third-

person poet who “thinks he can sing.” In this case, the text brings an ironic self-reference to the presumed poet of this book we are reading. Why the birds laugh at the poet is left unexplained. But the point is not to evoke a confounding mystery, it is to construct a sign to index Crane’s emerging argument for a new conception of “the poet,” who is being visibly dissociated here from the conventional signs of voice and song.

The argument is moved along in numbers III and IV, where a first person is introduced: “in the desert/ i saw a creature, naked bestial” (III). Because the scene is allegorically generalized, this first person turns to a kind of Everyman, an effect reinforced by the balladic form of the lines, which present a little dramatic encounter between the “I” and the “creature.” From this point the first-person grammar will be dislocated from its usual association with the first person of the quotidian author. The “I” enters a kind of cosmic space where it encounters various transhuman beings, powers, and dominions:

i stood upon a high place,

and saw, below, many devils (IX)

a learned man came to me once.

he said, “i know the way,—come.” (XX)

once i saw mountains angry,

and ranged in battle front. (XXII)

i walked in a desert.

and i cried,

"ah, god, take me from this place!"

a voice said, " it is no desert."

i cried, "well, but —

the sand, the heat, the vacant horizon."

a voice said, "it is no desert." (XLII)

The last selection—number XLII—illustrates another of the book's special poetic effects. The marriage of Crane's hieratic prose-poetic style with its bibliographical presentation produces some crucial symbolic relations. The "desert" of number III recurs through the sequence both literally and in various waste-place transformations. This "desert" emerges as a figure for the territory of all the lines in the book—and ultimately gets indexed by the paper on which the printed lines of black riders make their appearances. XLII suggests that Crane's bleak landscapes actually reveal the presence of a living world hidden from ordinary view. In *The Black Riders* we are to discover a new order of visible darkness.

i was in the darkness;

i could not see my words

nor the wishes of my heart.

then suddenly there was a great light —

"let me into the darkness again."

A particularly interesting transformation of the "desert" motif comes in number LXV:

once, i knew a fine song,

– it is true, believe me,–
it was all of birds,
and i held them in a basket;
when i opened the wicket,
heavens! they all flew away.
i cried, "come back, little thoughts!"
but they only laughed.
they flew on
until they were as sand
thrown between me and the sky.

In number II these song birds mocked the man who thought he could sing. Here the difference between the poet as *lector* and poet as *scriptor* shifts to a new revelation. The escaping birds undergo a double transformation: from grains of desert sand that obscure the air they mutate, at a second order of symbolic form, to suggest a night sky scattered with stars.

In an important sense, the whole of Crane's book is addressing the problem of poetic expression as it is passing into the age of mechanical reproduction. Number IV exhibits the problem in a splendid little gnomic expression:

yes, i have a thousand tongues,
and nine and ninety-nine lie.
though i strive to use the one,
it will make no melody at my will,

but is dead in my mouth.

The lines are a kind of riddle defining the non-lyrical, non-subjective character of the texts we read in Crane's book. Like the "I" of number III, the "speaker" of these lines is a kind of impersonality—in this case, not an Everyman but The Poet reflecting on his emergent historical crisis, which is symbolically figured in the typographical representation of the death of the subjective poet ("my will") and his lyric forms ("my mouth").

Number V completes the book's introductory sequence of lines. The text pivots around the conflicts raised by "a man" who issues a Zarathustrian command: "range me all men of the world in rows." A "terrific clamor" follows, echoing "the clash and clang" of number I even as the rows are recalling the lines of black riders ranged for march and struggle, like the mountains of number XXXVIII:

on the horizon the peaks assembled;

and as i looked,

the march of the mountains began.

and as they marched, they sang,

"aye! we come! we come!"

Like Poe's "The Conqueror Worm," number V unfolds a symbolic drama about the contradictory forces unleashed in poetic creation. Its import, however, is much closer to Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and the "Printing House" Blake reveals in Plate 15. The struggle raised by the man's rage for order in number V is very like the struggle between the forces of Blake's "Prolific" ("those who would not stand in rows") and "Devourer" ("those who pined to stand in rows"). Where Blake gives a comic inflection to this struggle, Crane's view is much darker ("the man

went to death, weeping”) —though of course for Crane, “the darkness” is his proper visionary environment, the land of the Black Riders.

The connections that function across the field of *The Black Riders* are often as clear as those that reach back from number V to number I, or as indirect—and less immediate—as the relation of “the desert” in number III to the “burning sand” in number XXI and “the sand” of number LXV. Or consider the relation of the “bloody scuffle” of number V and its “quarrel, world-wide”:

it endured for ages;

and blood was shed

And then observe the bibliographical inflection this is given in number XLVI:

many red devils ran from my heart

and out upon the page.

they were so tiny

the pen could mash them.

and many struggled in the ink.

Crane’s lines are plainly inflected with what Blake called “the Voice of the Devil.” While that voice comes in various tones—mocking and defiant, defeated and bewildered, intimate and sympathetic—all struggle for expression in the ink.

III

That basic figural form led Crane to the title he chose for his book. But the figure carried an expressive demand that Crane himself was in no position to meet. *Black Riders* is a remarkable achievement because the expressive demand implicit in Crane's writing was only fulfilled when Copeland and Day supplied it with an adequate graphical exponent. The book's impersonality, so to speak, is fulfilled in an interpretive-graphic design it acquires indirectly, from a non-authorial source.

The historical significance of that situation is impossible to overstate. It clearly forecasts the twentieth century's emphasis on "the reader's part" in the construction of meaning. Before the coming of the reader, The Poet will think: "i was in the darkness;/ i could not see my words." From elsewhere comes an illumination, signs of meaning expressed in words now made visible to The Poet. But in Crane's horizon, these great lights are themselves darkening signs—*black riders* drawing The Poet back into the prolific darkness. This return brings a visible, literal darkness—the typographical signs emerging in the white desert of the page—where The Poet can now see his words clearly for what they are: a darkness calling to another darkness, writer to reader, creator to re-creator.

This is a textual condition designed to expose the limits of positive knowledge. The graphic design of *The Black Riders* literally demonstrates how meaning comes in positive, deliverable quantities. But when they come, their material concreteness—their quantifiable status—measures their limits. Crane's unregenerate linguistic text forecasts, summons, the emergence of those measures, which regenerate the desire to know more (to know more about what we think we know): "let me into the darkness again."

So a crucial virtue follows from an interpretive reading that takes a form as positive and arresting as this book's graphical design. Academic interpretation customarily appears in an expository prose conceived as self-transparent—as if the commentator knows whereof he writes, as if he were bringing "a great light" to the situation. Even when the interpreter discusses his target subjects as ambiguous, dark, or contradictory, the prose discussions do not normally mark their own declarations as ambiguous,

dark, or contradictory. But that is precisely what follows from the decision to make an intellectual issue of the forms of expression.

And that Copeland and Day raised such an issue is plain from the reception that the book received. Praising *The Black Riders* in a review in *The Bookman*, Harry Thurston Peck was clearly caught off guard by the graphic design. “Mr. Stephen Crane is the Aubrey Beardsley of poetry,” his review began—“a true poet” because like “Mr. Beardsley with all his absurdities [he] is none the less a master of black and white” (Weatherford, 63). Peck is responding primarily to the graphic design—the “lines” of the book—and less to its “poetry” as such. Not knowing how to deal with that graphic design, Peck—like the many reviewers who would parody the book—dismissed it as “mere eccentricity of form,” irrelevant to the majesty of Crane’s “verse.” Thirty years later, Amy Lowell will take a similar line when she argues that the neglect of Crane’s poetic “virility and harsh passion” was the fault of “his various publishers,” who cast his work in ludicrous decadent forms.

These responses have had the experience of *The Black Riders* but have missed the meaning. Copeland and Day’s design, however, goes to the heart of the matter, reading the poems in the same dark aesthetic spirit that the author writ. They do not tell us *what* Crane’s enigmatic lines mean—they demonstrate *how* they mean.

We can see the interpretive situation better by making an experiment with one of Crane’s pieces. Number X is especially useful because it was twice graphically interpreted—first by Copeland and Day and a short while later by Melanie Norton. Here are the lines in relatively plain text form:

Should the wide world roll away

Leaving black terror

Limitless night,

Nor God, nor man, nor place to stand

Would be to me essential

If thou and thy white arms were there

And the fall to doom a long way.

Crane is migrating Byron, and even more Poe, Byron's avatar, into free verse. The radical artifice cultivated by those famous precursors is here vulgarized to a mixed style emphasized by the stumbling inelegance of line 5 ("Would be to me essential"). Yet the lines seems to preserve a kind of residual poetic formality, as if they half remembered, in a debased time or a distracted way, the glory that was Byron and the grandeur that was Poe: lines 1 and 2 rhyme (accidentally?) with lines 6 and 7, and the work pivots on line 4, which operates simultaneously in the grammar of lines 1-3 and that of lines 5-7.

Copeland and Day's rendering doesn't set aside the plain text version, it excavates it. The flagrantly "classical" book design brings high artifice to what might otherwise have seemed a careless text. Now those loose rhymes seem the formalities of another language, like the remarkable off rhymes that Rossetti discovered for English verse through his poetical *Italienische Reise, The Early Italian Poets*.

should the wide world roll away

leaving black terror

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But simply quoting the lines in these small caps doesn't reveal the interpretive force the general book brings to each of its works. In plain text, number X is a kind of loose epigram; in *The Black Riders* it turns gnomic, one of sixty-eight similar pieces that are delivered as if they were fragments recovered from a lost scripture.

Then there is Melanie Norton's illustrated text produced for *The Bookman* in 1896.



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Here the text is not so much illustrated as illuminated in a mode that recalls, for example, the design for the prose-poem "Argument" to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where the design penetrates and merges into the text. Note how the idea implicit in the poem—that the white page space is the

abstract form of the “white arms” —gets materialized. The white figure appearing through the black ink below the text is not the second person of the poem but the first person, here seen as having fallen into a state of repose. First and second person merge in this figure, born out of the white space waiting “there” and only to be realized through the onset of the visible darkness.

That visual double-mindedness brings interpretive clarity to an odd collision of semantic meanings in the text. Is the text stating that the white arms remove the threat of a long fall to doom? Or is it saying that the promise of those white arms makes a long fall to doom something to be desired? While the text offers both meanings to us, Norton’s design explicates the paradox they represent.

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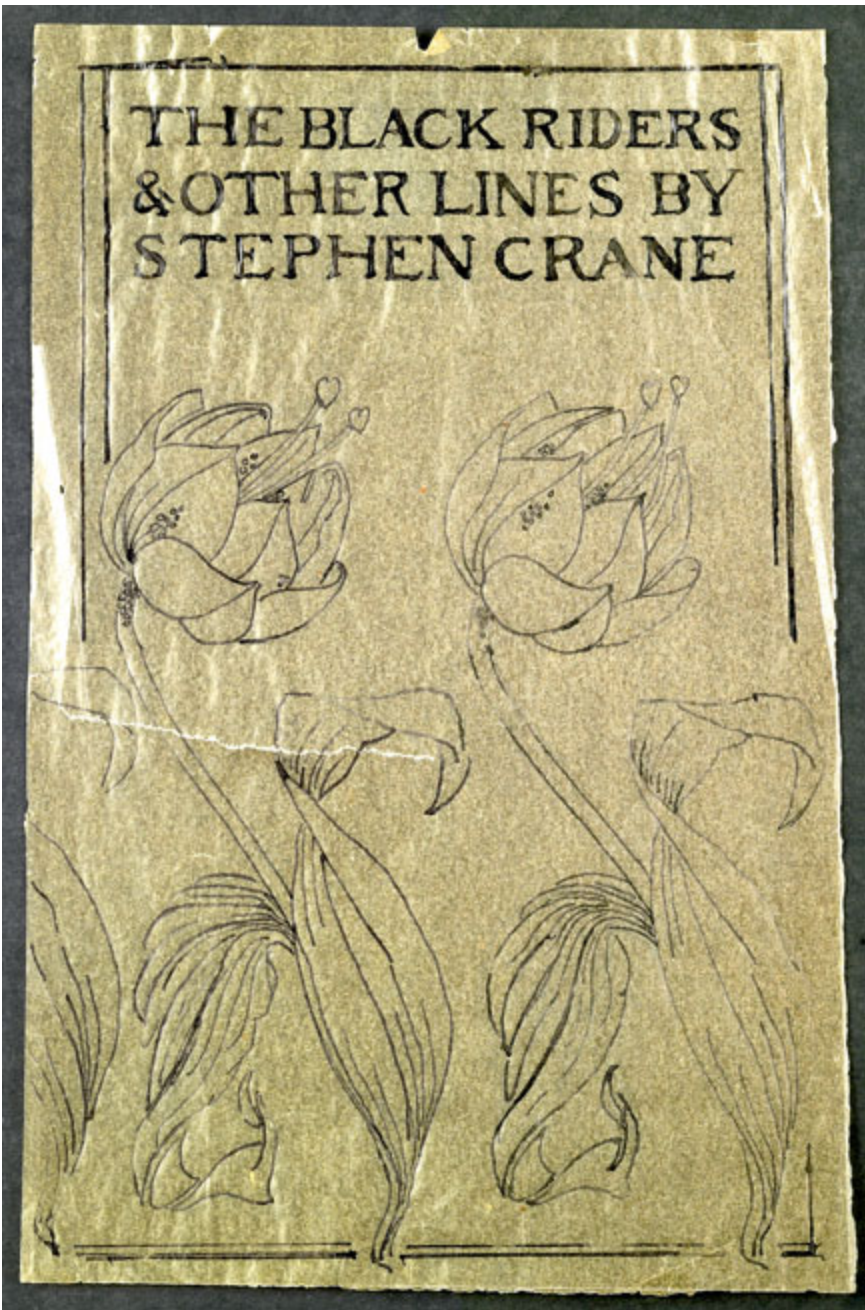
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The Black Riders: Additional Textual Materials

Note: All of these materials are housed in the Walter Barrett Collection, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library. The Barrett collection has as well multiple copies of the prospectus as well as multiple copies of the first edition. Fredson Bowers discusses what he calls the “three stages of proof” of these materials in his essay on the “History and Analysis” of the book in his 1975 edition (see especially pages 199-207, 242-243).

Cover design (rejected), perhaps by Frederick Gordon: ink on tracing paper, 203 x 120 mm.



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Frederick Gordon's rejected design for cover and spine: India ink on heavy paper, 276 x 203mm.

BLACK
RIDERS

BLACK RIDERS

BY STEPHEN CRANE

COPELAND
AND DAY
BOSTON

6 5/8" x 4 1/4"

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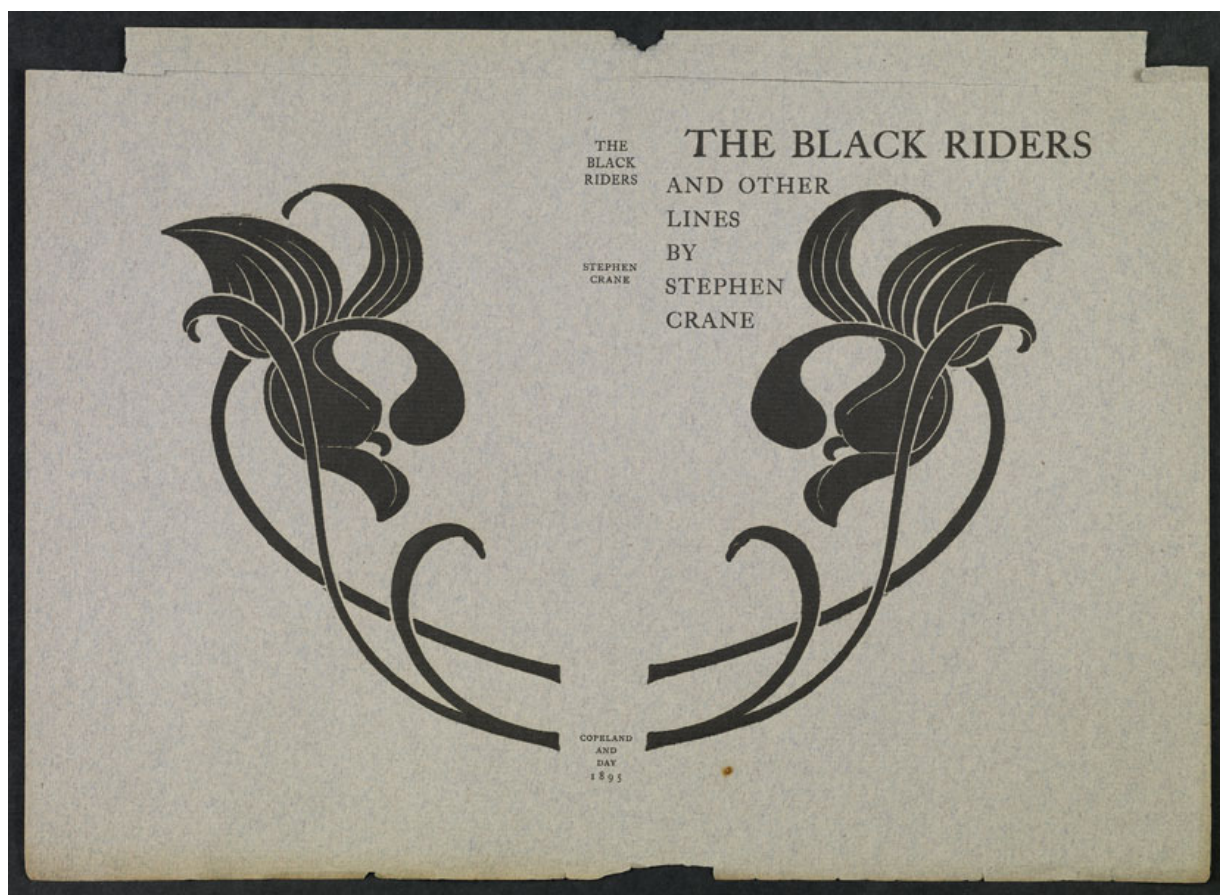
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Cover design adapted from the rejected design by Frederick Gordon (India ink on cardboard with frame in pencil, 131 x 95 mm); executed by Copeland and Day in house artist with handwritten instructions: "Same size —two plants one like this reversed", and with a note to the left "use a graver on plate/to open white line/where ink filled up".

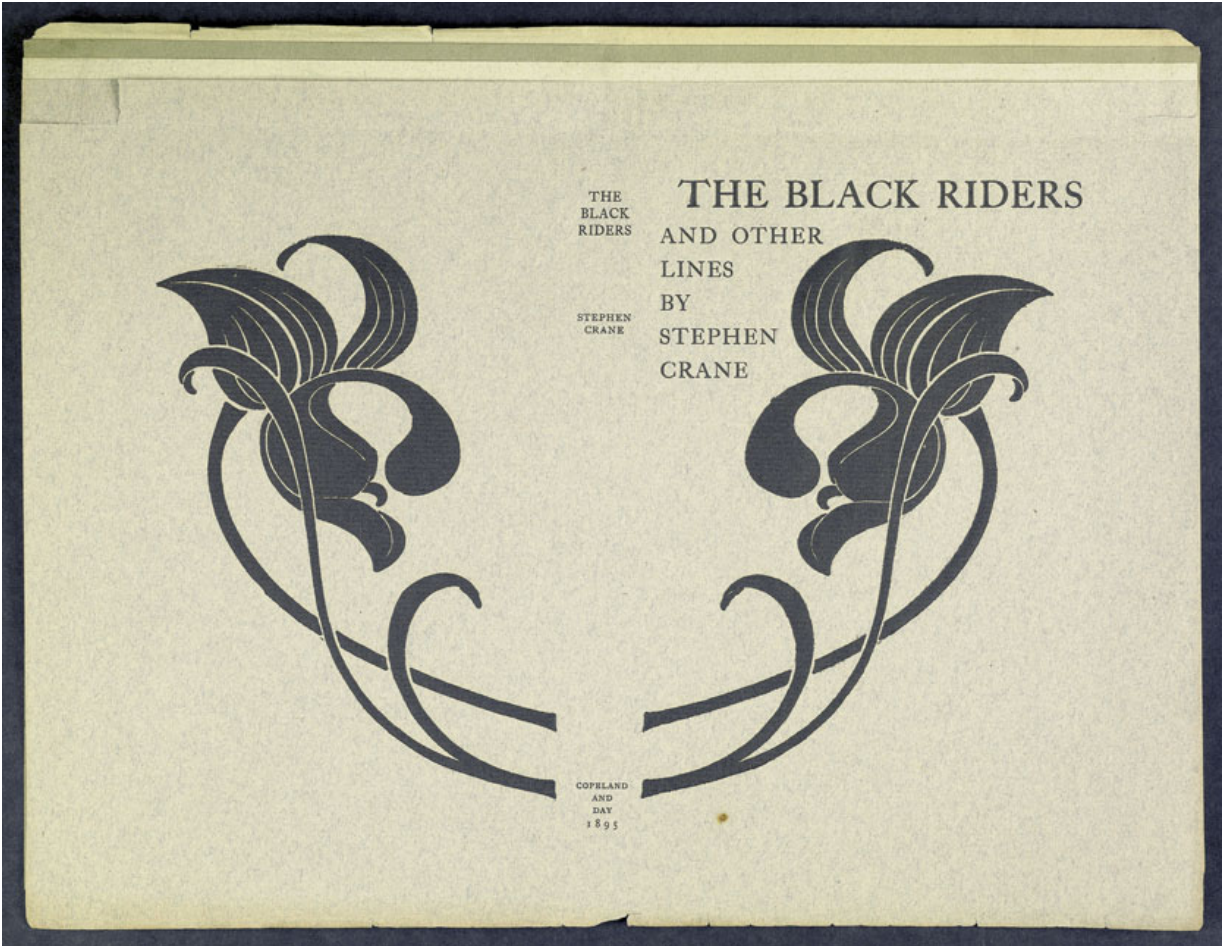


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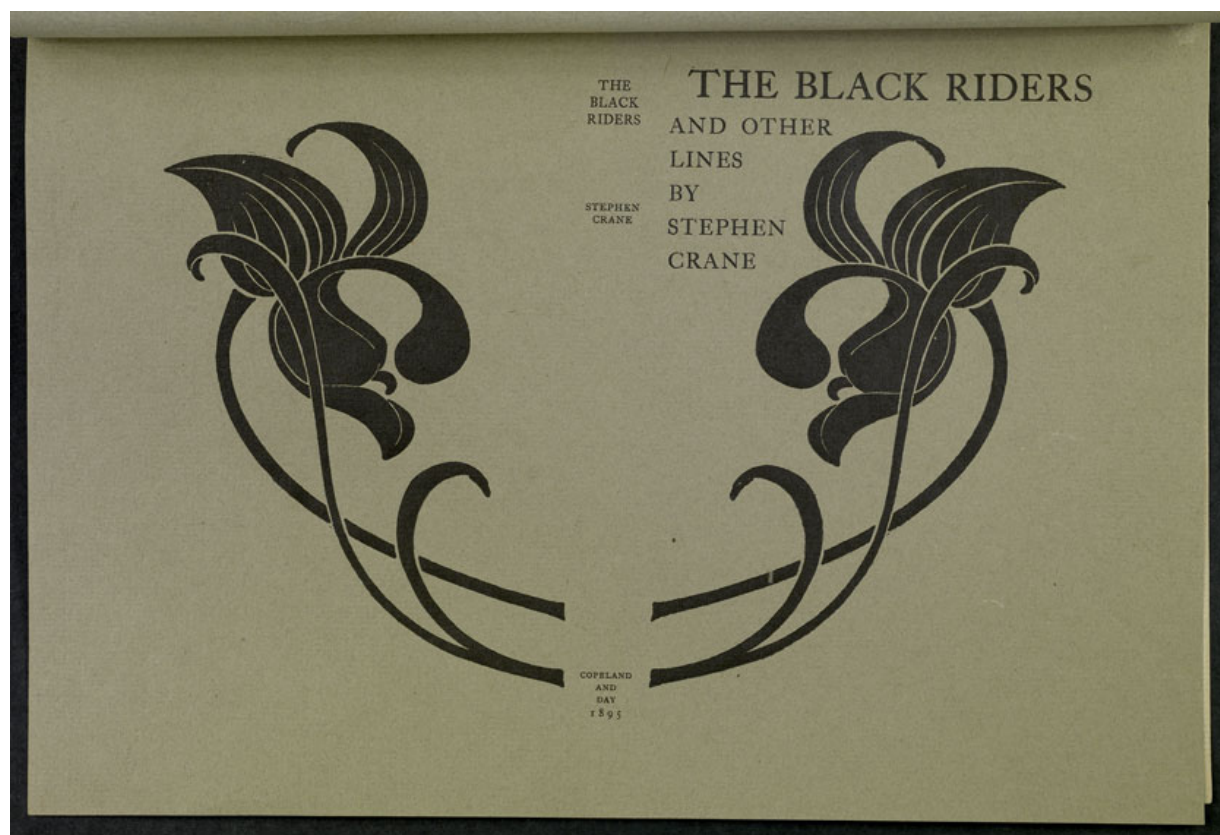
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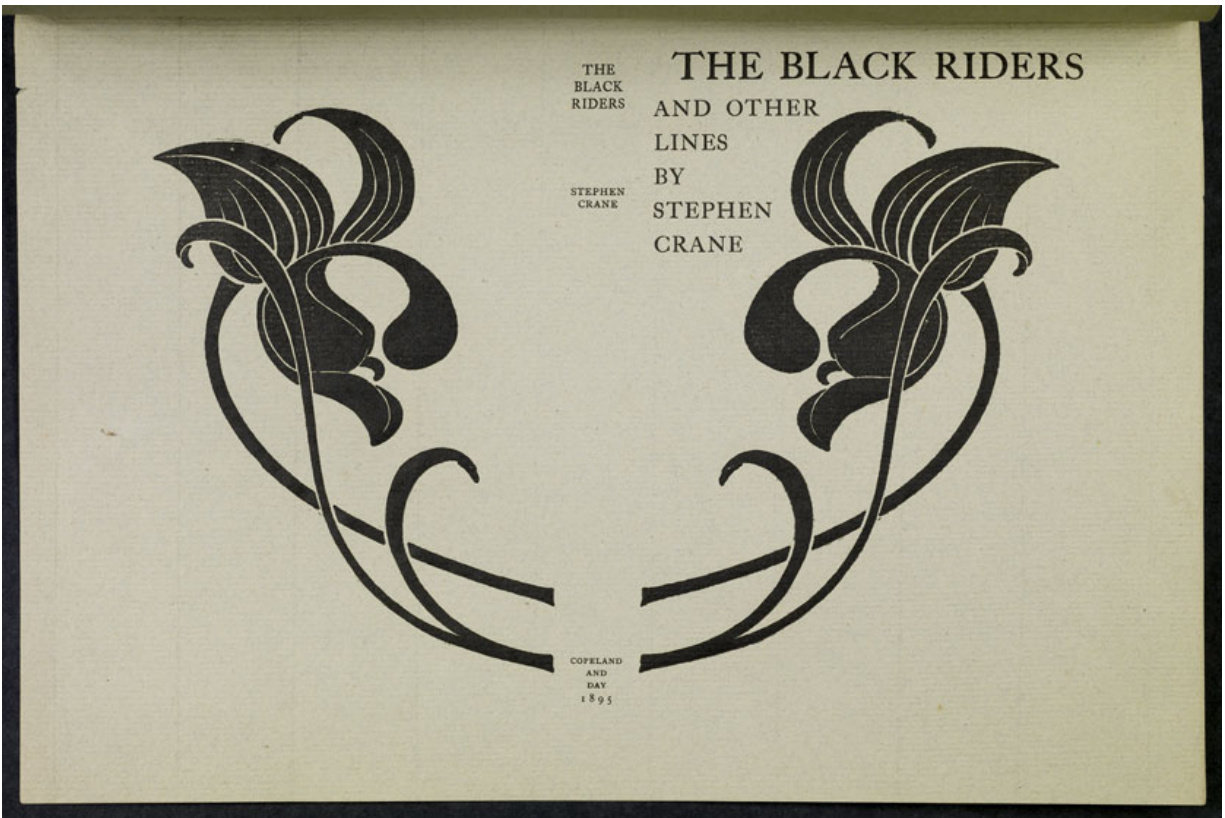
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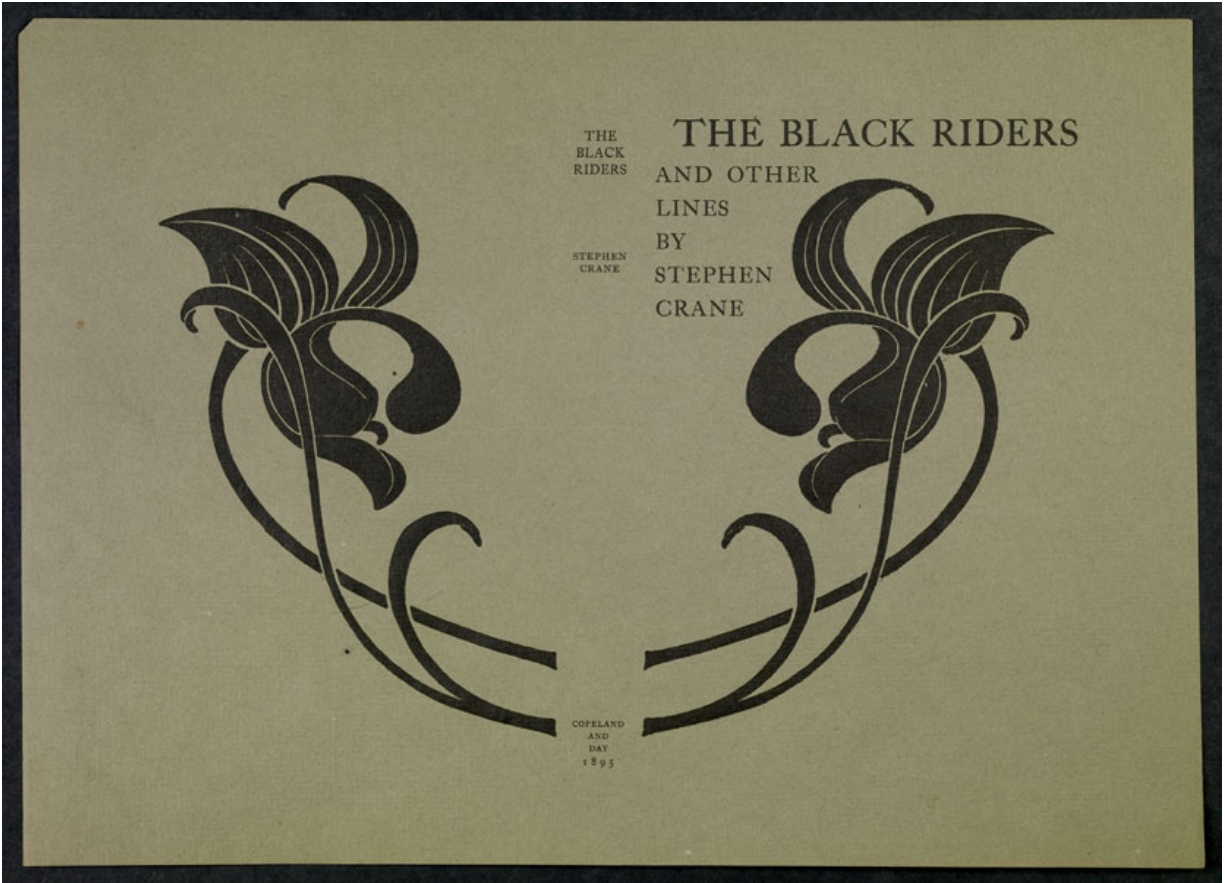
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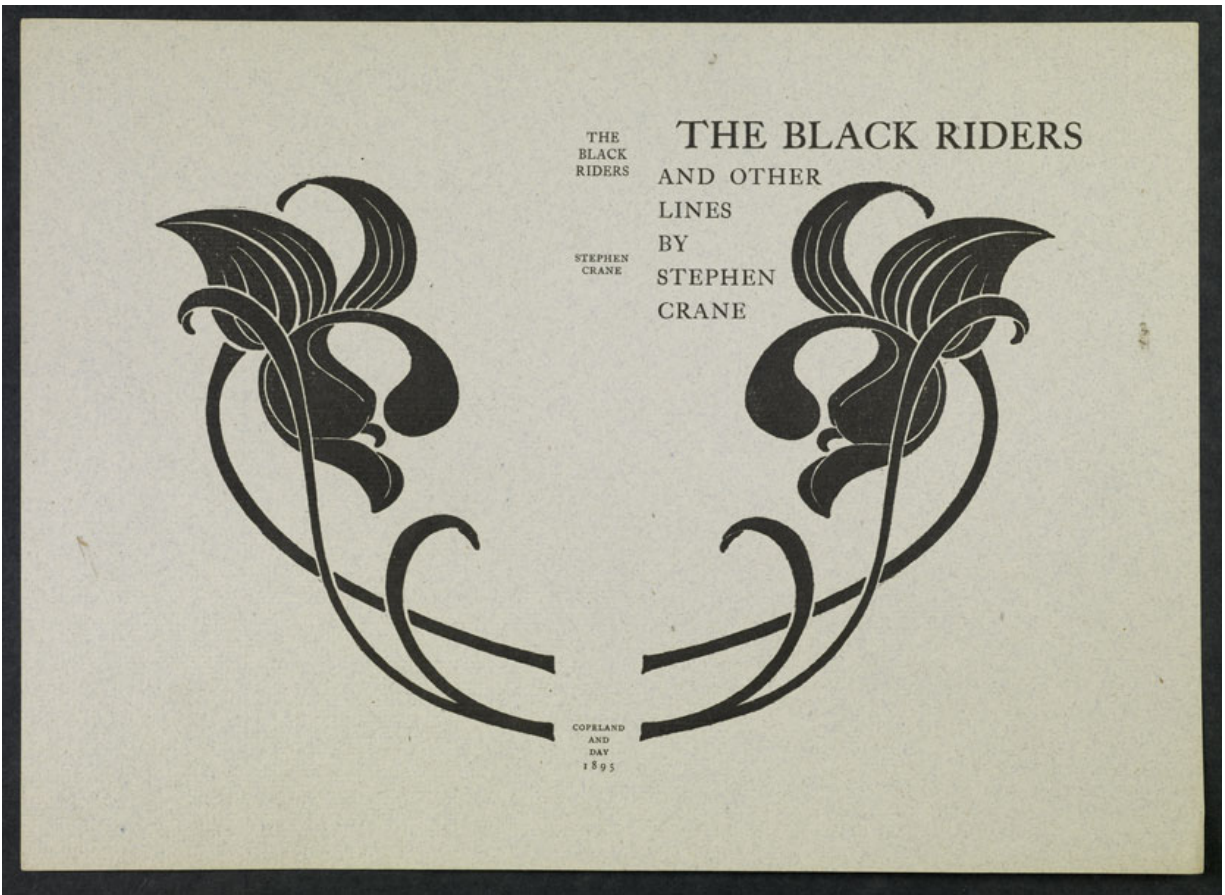
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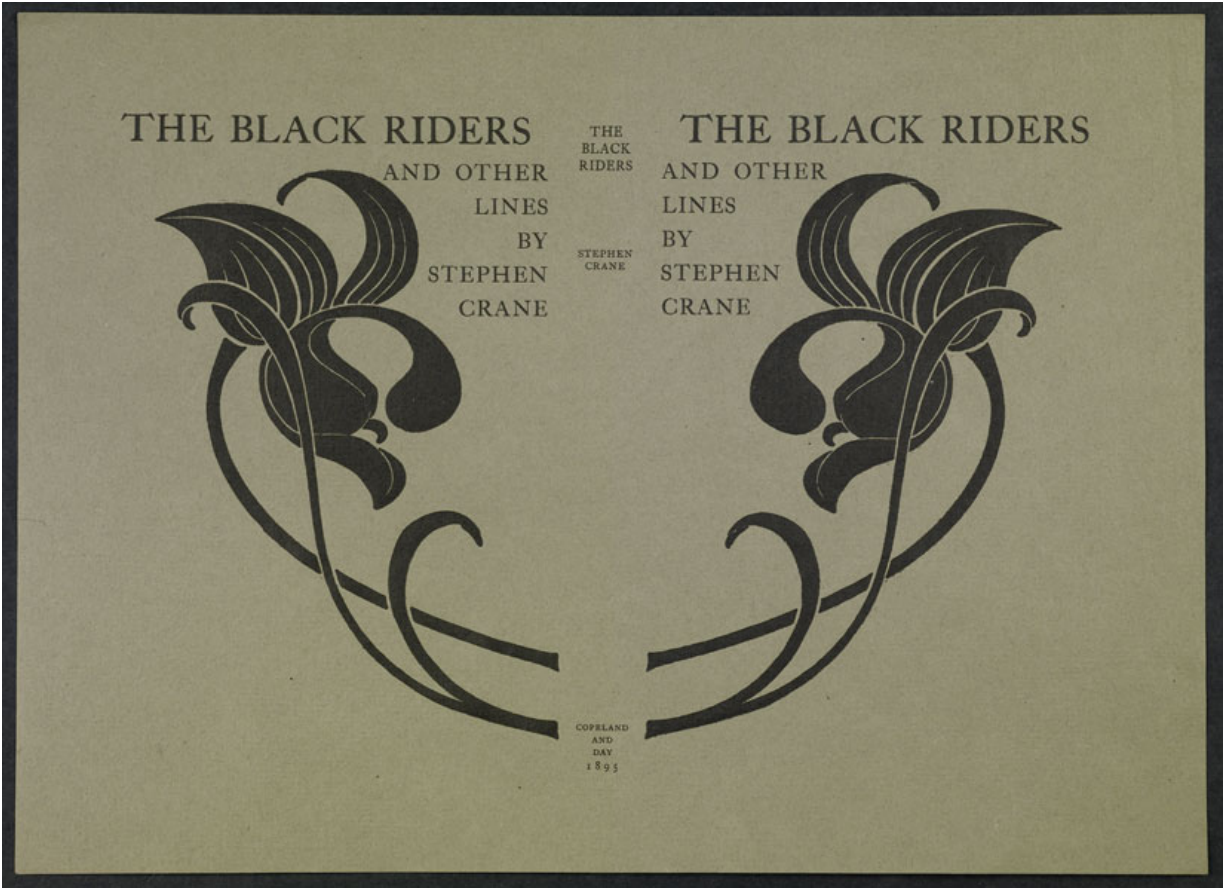


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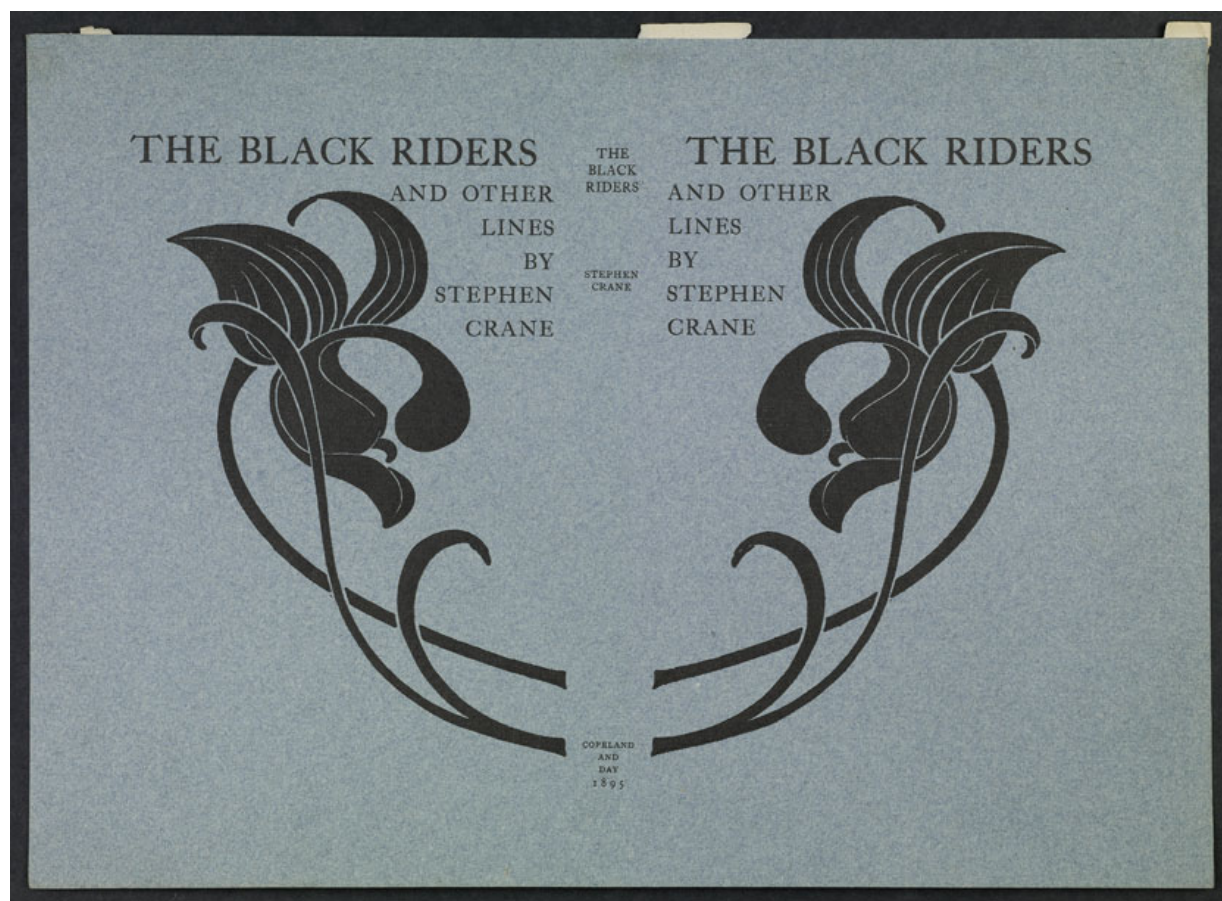


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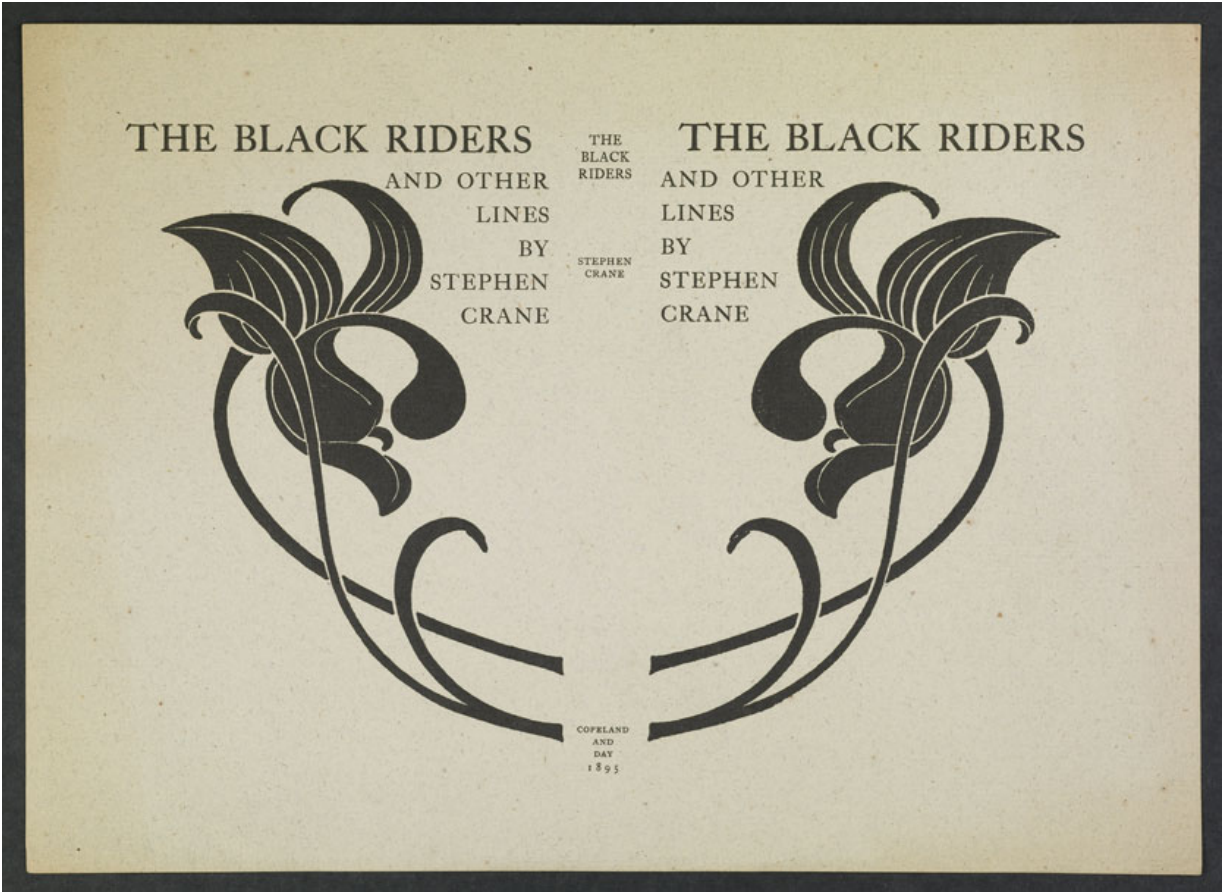
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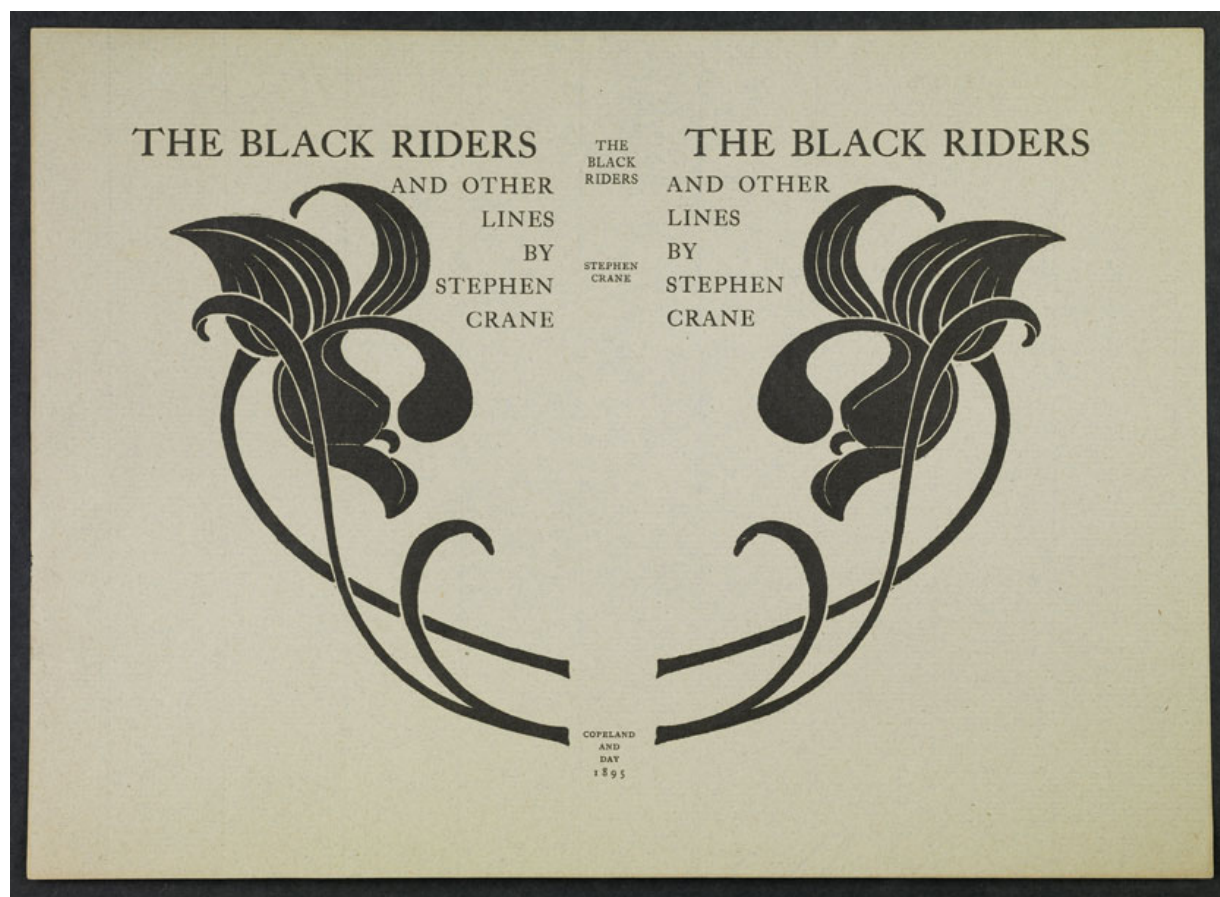
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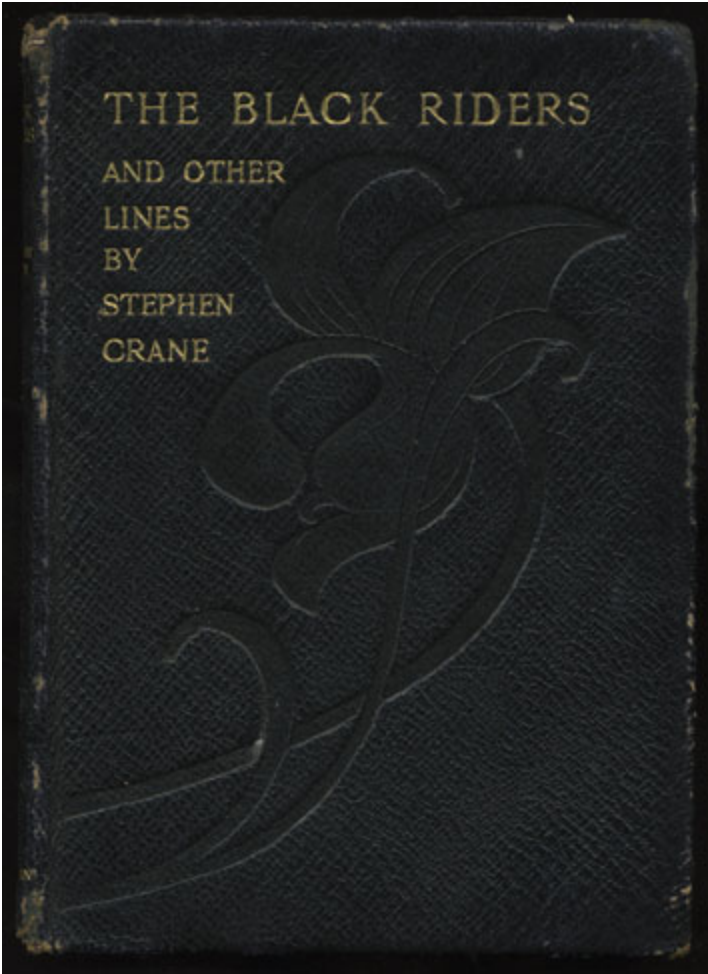
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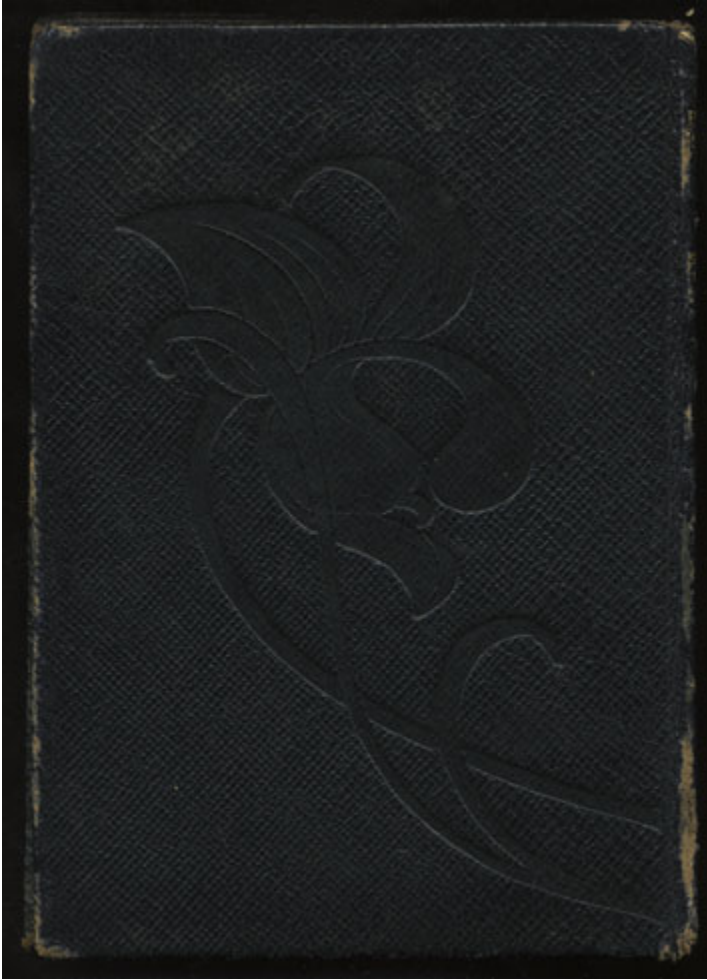
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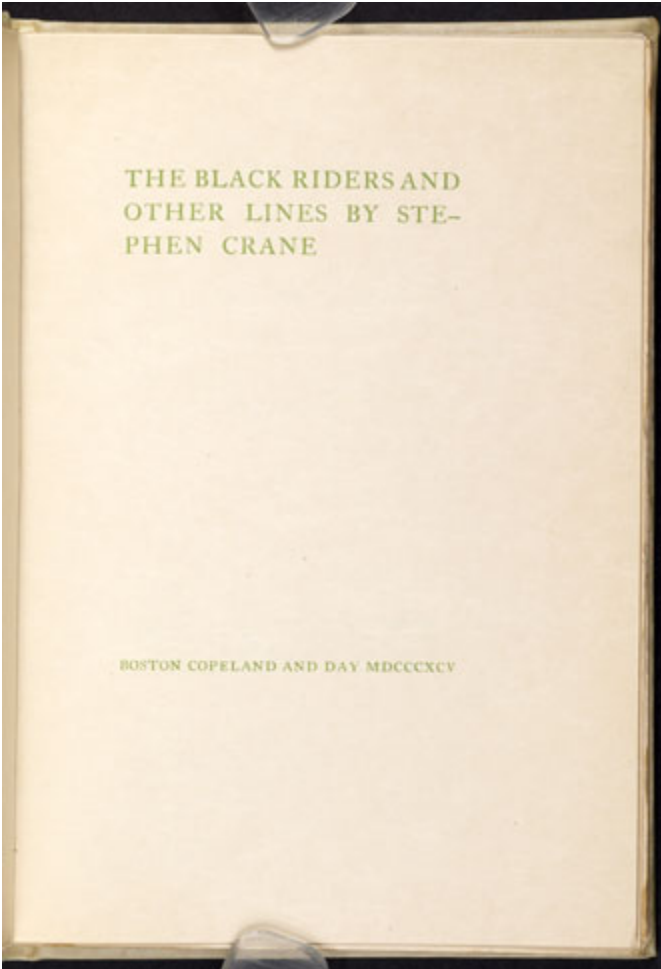
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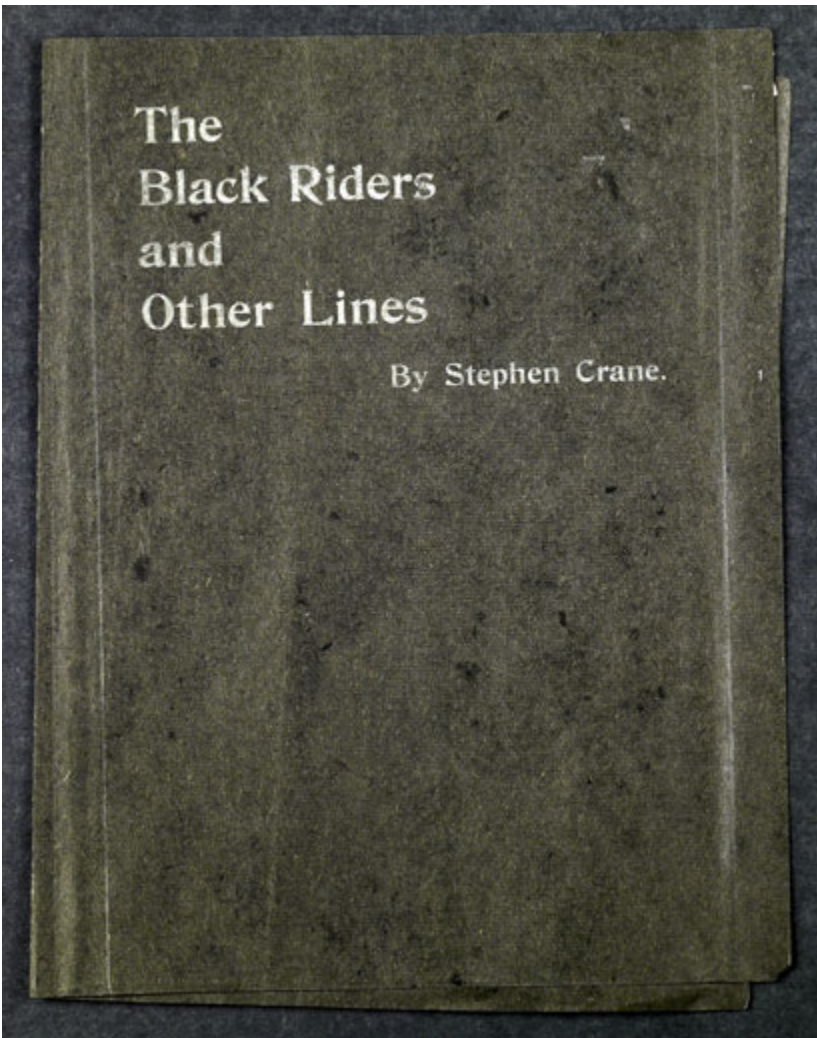
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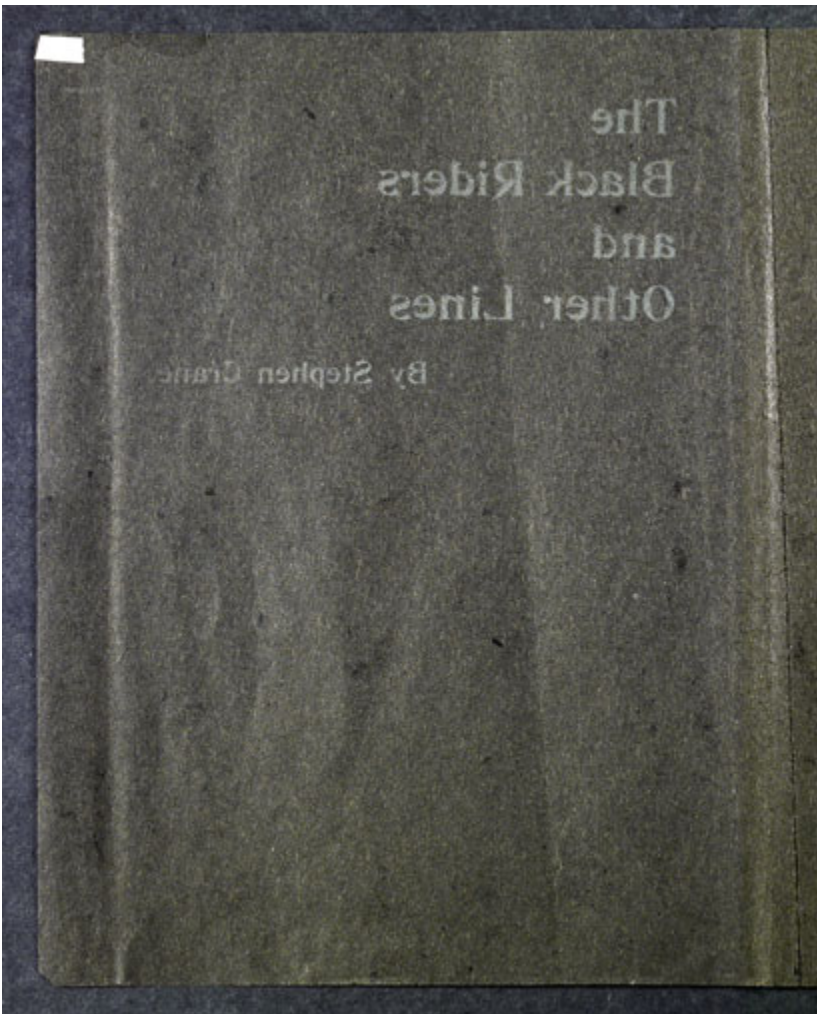
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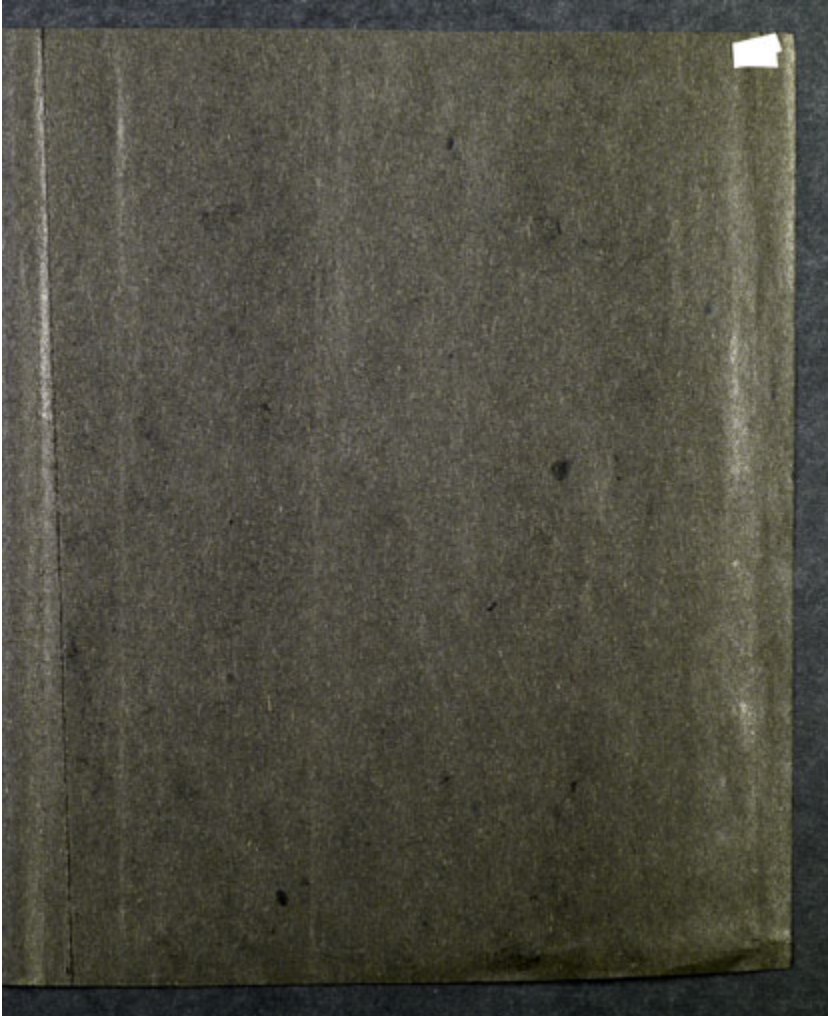
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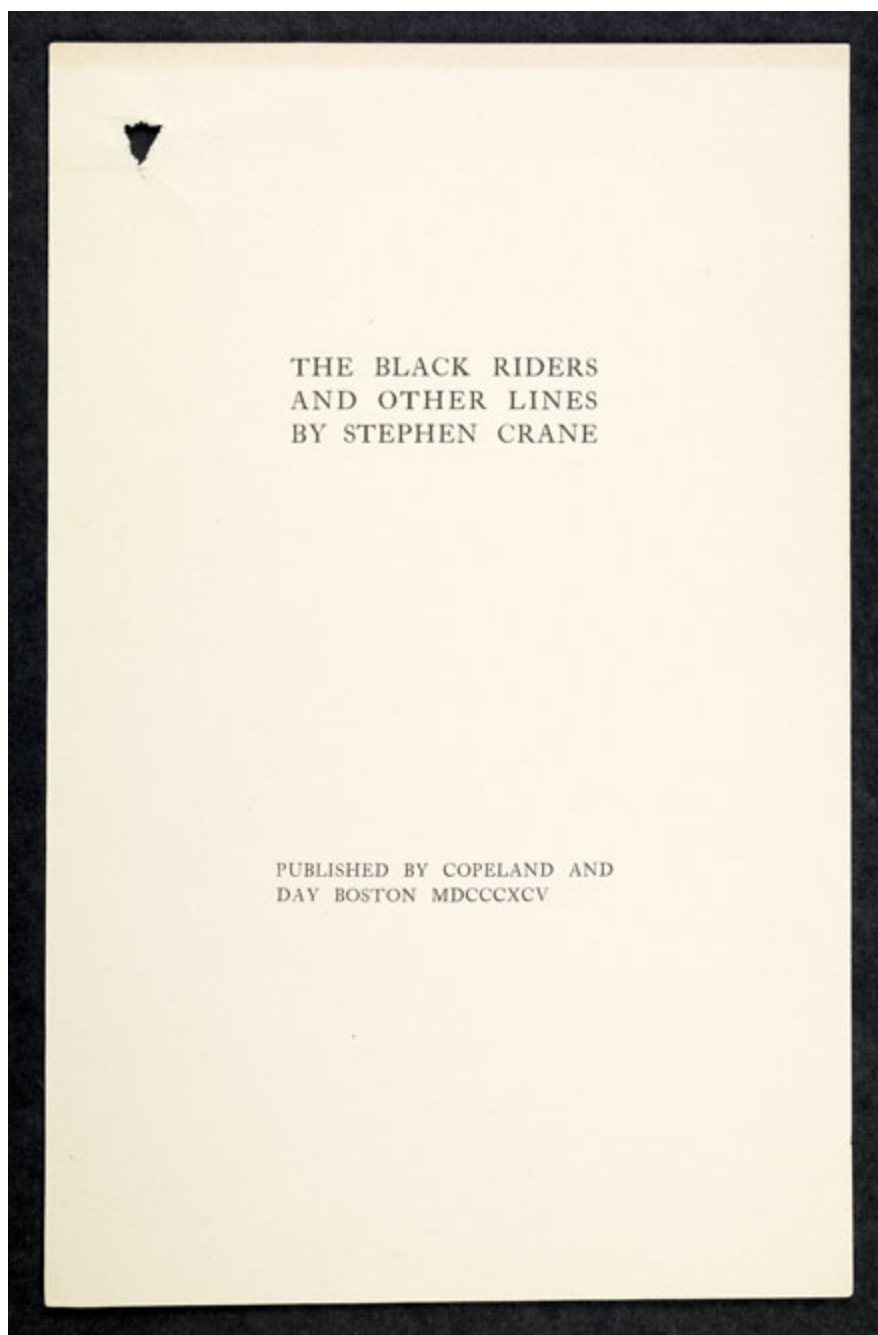
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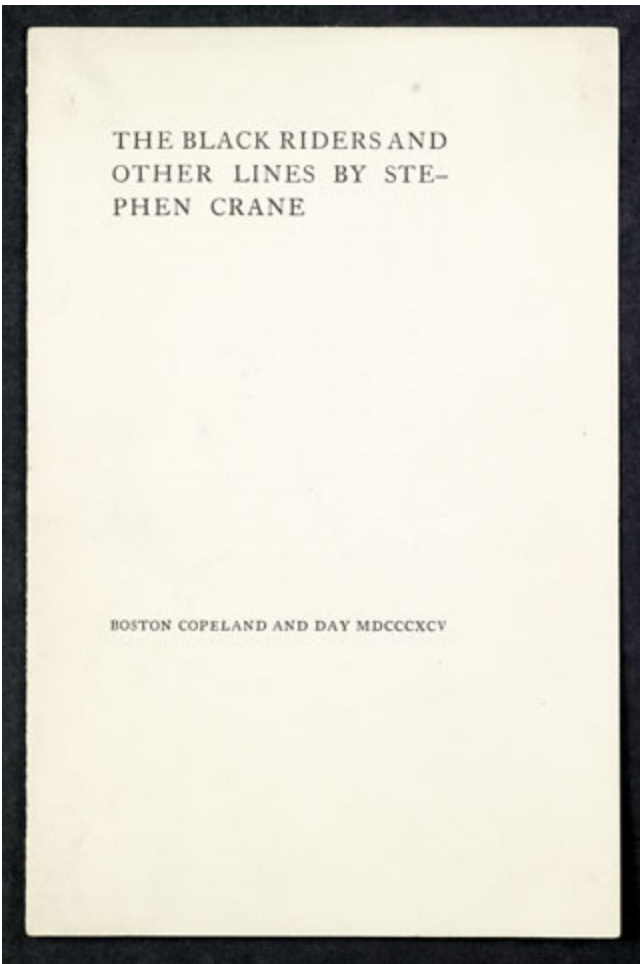
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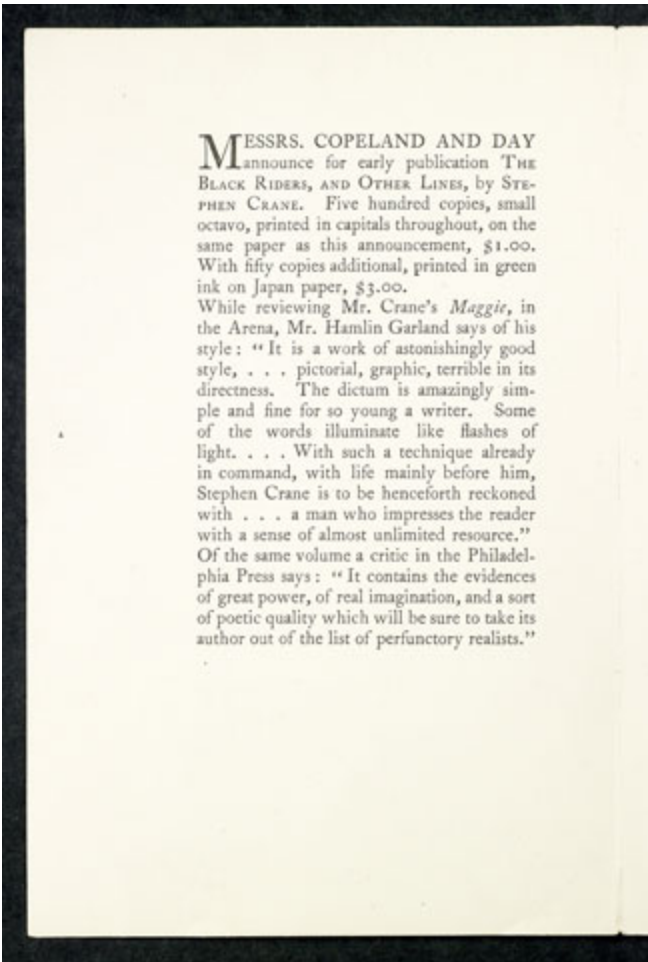
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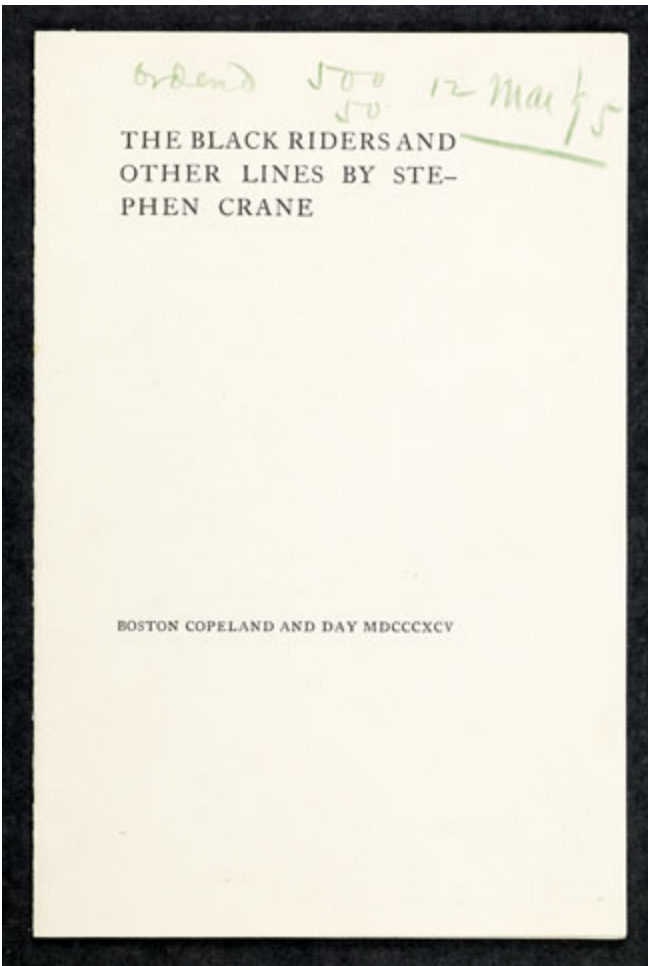
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